A New Morning with Chitta Ranjan:

Adventures in Co-Realizations and World Transformations

Edited by

Ananta Kumar Giri

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Chitta Ranjan Das (October 3, 1923-January 16, 2011) was a creative seeker and transformative experimenter of humanity who continues to be with us after his physical passing away. Chitta Ranjan believed in a radical spirituality, politics and practice of self, social and world transformations. Walking with fellow seekers and travelers with love and critique, compassion and confrontation was sacred and holy for him. He pointed ways to the future while nurturing what is valuable from the past for many of us. The present book continues our journey with Chitta Ranjan. It is an expression of our humble strivings towards realizing a world of beauty, dignity and dialogues in which many seeking souls from India and around the world take part. This book is of interest to students and teachers across such fields of learning as philosophy, literature, education, sociology and anthropology. It is also a call for all seeking souls to continue their strivings in the fields of self and social transformations.

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Dedicated to Chitta Bhai, Biswanath Pattanaik,
Nityananda Mahapatra and many of his co-walkers and
co-fighters, old and new, for the birth of a new
world of beauty, dignity and dialogues.

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Foreword

To many during the freedom struggle in India, Gandhiji's call to students to quit schools and colleges had seemed a rather irresponsible gesture. His trenchant critique of the education system prevailing during colonial rule often met with dissatisfaction, even hostility. He was asked to explain why he, who was himself a product of western education, sought to deprive the young in India of its benefits. To this question put to him at a meeting held in Cuttack in 1921 Gandhi had famously responded claiming that truly great Indian like Chaitanya or Sankara did not need western education to make their precious contribution to human civilization and that he himself would have been better equipped to serve humanity without the 'benefits' of western education. Gandhi's remarks drew flak from his eminent contemporaries including Tagore.

With hindsight it becomes clear that, while Gandhi's anti-colonial political strategies enjoyed widespread popularity and acquired a huge mass base, his critique of the education system put in place by the British found few ardent enthusiasts. His attempts to find alternatives to the system aroused feelings of ambivalence, even open hostility. It was as if Indians, politically opposed to British rule, were in many ways culturally complicit with it. No wonder then that Gandhi's experiments with basic education found few takers after independence and schools offering basic education could not survive for long in the face of growing official apathy and the hostility of an emergent urban elite. Institutions devoted to translating Gandhi's ideas on education now survive as islands encompassed by private as well as state-sponsored educational institutions catering to the rising

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expectations of a consumerist, competitive urban middle class, which provides increasingly attractive role models to the millions living in rural India.

However, it would be a mistake to suppose that the Gandhian critique of the education system has lost its relevance and can at best be considered interesting only from an academic point of view. While the unwillingness or inability of Modern India to translate Gandhi's educational vision into viable institutional practices is well-known, what has not been adequately documented is its transforming impact on the lives of many remarkable individuals in India. In their limited but inspiring way, many continued to carry forward Gandhi's experiments with education and strove to discover ways of democratizing knowledge in a world where education seeks to deepen social, economic and cultural divides and reinforce existing hierarchies.

In the context of Orissa, Gandhi's critique of the education system of colonial India inspired quite a few individuals to engage in a life-long experiment with modes of acquiring and disseminating knowledge outside existing institutions of learning. Three such individuals come immediately to the mind: Binod Kanungo(1912-1990), Manmohan Choudhury(1915-2003) and Chittaranjan Das(1923-2011). One can go on adding to the list but the three just mentioned embody in memorable ways Gandhi's vision of education as a living human enterprise, as a means of regenerating society.

Binod Kanungo left school as a young boy to take part in the freedom movement. But he never gave up the quest for learning. In fact, in his autobiography, *A Drop-out Teaches Himself*, he describes prison as a place of learning. Committed to democratizing knowledge, he sought to disseminate it through the language ordinary people use in the course of living their daily lives. The result of his perseverance was a multi-volume

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encyclopaedia in Odia, a large number of books on science and contemporary history. Kanungo brilliantly succeeded in demonstrating that modern Indian languages can serve as effective vehicles of modern knowledge.

Like Kanungo, Manmohan Choudhury received little formal education and was largely self-educated. He too participated in the freedom struggle as a child and went to jail. All his life- he died at the age of ninety-eight - acquired and disseminated knowledge outside the framework formal, institutionalized education. He wrote highly acclaimed books in Odia on bee-keeping, Gandhian philosophy, economics and nuclear physics, which are readily accessible to ordinary readers. His autobiography has achieved the status of a modern classic and he has translated his mother's famous autobiography into English.

A younger contemporary of Kanungo and Choudhury, Chittaranjan Das gave up his college studies to join the Quit India Movement. Like them, he, too, was jailed during the freedom struggle. However, unlike Kanungo and Choudhury, he acquired some experience of working within the ambit of institutionalized education. After the experiment of running a jungle school in Champatimunda in Angul failed Das joined Rural Insitute, Bichpuri, Agra, and taught there for a few years. However, after leaving this institution, he lived the life of a roving intellectual, not affiliated to any institution, a life devoted entirely to writing, discussion, debate and dialogue. Although a polyglot – he knew Danish, French, Swedish, and Finnish among other languages – he chose to express his ideas through Odia, which he shaped into a powerful instrument of analysis of issues, of interrogating fossilized ideas and practices and provoking people, especially the young, to question received assumptions and values. In a culture fostering conformity and respect for tradition and authority, he was the voice of an intrepid rebel who urged a

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merciless scrutiny of our values and institutions. Creativity, he believed, would be possible only in a climate of questioning.

The shaping influence of Gandhi and Tagore – he spent a few years studying at Santiniketan after release from jail – led Das to make his writing serve as a window to the world. In fact, 'Window to the World' is the title of the book by Das which received the Sahitya Akademi award in 1994. He was keenly alert to the dangers nationalist self-assertion quickly degenerating into xenophobic provincialism. This accounts for Das's faith in translation as a means of overcoming one's narrowness by carrying on a dialogue with other cultures, other ways of seeing and interpreting the world. Das's translations from French, Danish, Bangla, English have made Odias members of what Susan Sontag calls a "Community of Literature."

The passing of Chittaranjan Das provides us with a fitting occasion for taking a fresh look at the significance, if not the success of, Gandhi's searching critique of the modern education system. Dr Ananta Kumar Giri's brief assessment of Chittaranjan Das's life and work does this precisely this, combining as it does erudition with deep understanding. Through his friendly but sharply observant eye we glimpse the fascinating contours of a rich and remarkable life, a life that will go on inspiring generations to come. His co travelers from across the world help us realize the global significance of the struggles and seekings of Chitta Ranjan and walking in a new morning with him, each other and the world.

Jatindra K Nayak

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Preface

[..] Politics assume[s] a dimension that it cannot integrate for all that, a dimension that overflows it, one concerning an *ontology or an ethology of "being with,"* attached to that absolute experience of sense and passion for sense for which the word *sacred* was but the designation.

-Jean-Luc Nancy (2008), *Dis-Enclsosure: The Destruction of Christianity*, p.5 (emphasis added).

It is with great sadness that I receive the news about the passing of Professor Chitta Ranjan Das who was - as you say -a truly "creative seeker". He pointed the way for many of us

—Fred Dallmayr (personal communication).

It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body [..] But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere until the world shall know that it is one with God.

—Swami Vivekananda, 4 July 1902.

Chitta Ranjan Das (October 3, 1923-January 16, 2011) is a creative seeker and transformative experimenter of humanity who continues to be with us after his physical passing away. Chitta Ranjan believed in a radical spirituality, politics and practice of self, social and world transformatios. Walking with fellows seekers and travelers with love and critique, compassion and confrontation which was sacred and holy for him, he pointed ways for many of us. His pointers emerged out of dialogue and co-walking and were invitations for further quest, seeking, swimming and climbing for himself as well as people at large.

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In this book, we continue the journey of being together with Chitta Ranjan, each other and the world. The first section of the book presents us a glimpse into creative worlds and works of Chitta Ranjan. In his opening essay, Ananta Kumar Giri presents a broad overview of the creative *oeuvre* of Chitta Ranjan in the last six decades of his tireless strivings. In his reflection, "Knowing the Unknown: A Search for Homage to Chitta Ranjan," O.P. Bhasin, himself a deep seeker like Chitta Ranjan, narrates the remarkable co-presence that both the souls felt during their meeting, a co-presence which can transcend barriers of space and time and be an invitation to all of us concerned to realize such pure joy of being together when we meet with each other. In his reflection, Gideon Kressel narrates his meeting with Chitta Ranjan and how Chitta Ranjan left an imperishable presence with him, his family and the Institute when he visited him and the Ben-Gurion University in Beer-Seva, Israel in 1990. This is followed by the reflections of Aurobindo Behera who had had a long-standing association with Chitta Ranjan. Behera tells us about Chitta Ranjan's incorrigible optimism. In his contribution, Rabinarayan Dash tells us about his walking with Chitta Ranjan in his many dreams and endeavours, from translating Albert Camus' *Outsider* to his starting the creative educational inistiative of Educare. This is followed by the reflections of Ananta Putel who tells us how Chitta Ranjan is a source of inspiration for him in leaving a well-paying job and starting a community of education and co-living named *Viswaneedam*, the Nest of the World, which is also the name of the home in which Chitta Ranjan lived. In his following ovation, "The Virtues of an Epistemic Agent," philosopher Ranjan Kumar Panda explores some of the epistemic virtues in Chitta Ranjan such as *sraddha* and courage.

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This is followed by a moving note, "Move On! Move On!' by novelist and activist Ase Moller Hansen from Bergen, Norway, who has been inspired by reading some of the works of Chitta Ranjan, available in English especially his *Letters From a Forest.*

These reflections in the first part of our book are followed by the second part, "A New Morning with Chitta Ranjan: Philosophy, Literature and Social Transformations." Chitta Ranjan had a life-long passion for and engagement with literature, philosophy and social transformation. Thus it is befitting that we should have a broad-based and wide-ranging dialogue on these issues as a way of our continued walking and embodying the seeking and evolving co-presence of Chitta Ranjan. In his opening essay in this part, Giri presents some broad issues in realizing creative relationship between literature and society on the one hand and philosophy and literature on the other. He also discusses the need to bring creative eforsts in philosophy and literature to visions and practices of human development and social transformations. In his essay, "Literature and Social Transformation: Chitta Ranjan Das as Creative Critic and Organic Intellectual," John Clammer discusses the signigicance of Chitta Ranjan's work especially his works of border-crossing. In the subsequent essay, "Dwelling as a Ground of Being," Marcus Bussey discusses the significance of his experiments in education. Ivan Marquez follows this with a personal note how he would like to meet with Chitta Bhai after reading his work. He also finds a rebel in Chitta Bhai who resonates with the spirit of of such dissenters as Albert Camus, a point also suggested by Clammer and Dash.

The following three essays were presented in the workshop in dialogue with Chitta Ranjan's work at Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai in February 2011. The first essay

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by Swami Hariprasad here touches briefly the significance of his work and then discusses wider issues of literature, science, philosophy and *dharma.* The subsequent essay of S. Paneerselvam discusses the issues of philosophy, literarature and social emancipation in Tamil literary traditions and cultural history with a special focus on the epic work *Thirukkural.* Such a discussion of epic resonates with the spirit of Chitta Ranjan who had once told me in a conversation during our Suhrut study and work camp in May 1990: poetry does not only deal with moments, it has an epic element. Paneerselvam's essay is followed by Sivaraman's who presents us creative border-crossing in contemporary Indian theatres.

In his afterword, Kailash C. Baral, an enthusiastic and inspiring critic of our times, situates Chitta Ranjan in the context of contemporary literary and cultural criticism and also in the context of critical traditions in Odisha. Baral urges us to mourn in creative ways the physical passing away of Chitta Ranjan so that we continue the journey of our co-realizations and world transformations with love, anger and wonder.

Independence Day
August 15, 2012

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Chennai

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Part - One

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A New Morning with Chitta Ranjan: Adventures in Co-Realizations and World Transformations[1]

1

Ananta Kumar Giri

By their capacity for the immortal deed, by their ability to leave non-perishable traces behind, men, their individual mortality notwithstanding, attain an immortality of their own and prove themselves to be of a "divine" nature.

—Hannah Arendt (1959), *The Human Condition*, p. 19.

A dynamism would have been the norm and routine of our life. To tell you the truth, that spontaneous dynamism is the health of our life [..] With our sacred conservatism if we bound ourselves only to what is there then there would be lots of mud in the pond of our life. So there should be a continued process of cleaning up mud which means we would have to continuously widen the paths so that new streams of waters can enter there. Nothing would be rotten. It means in our mortal body everything would remain as immortal. Yes we would realize that in an integral healthy reality, which is continuously being reborn, nothing is dying.

— Chitta Ranjan Das (2010c), *Yoga Samanyaya: Prabeshika*, p. 2-3.

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I must make it plain that this means a lesson not in simple life, but in creative life. For life may grow complex, and yet if there is a living personality in its center, it will still have the unity of creation, it will carry its own weight in perfect grace, and will not be a mere addition to the number of facts that add only to go to swell a crowd.

— Rabindra Nath Tagore (1961), "Poet's School," p. 57.

Tagore's life provides an interesting ground for studying the growth and maturation of a great person, the gradual ripening of the first emotive years into those of a more complete realization, not by any ulterior strain and stress, but through a gradual phase-by-phase growth through creative spontaneity. It happens only to him who knows how to keep his portals open to the whole world of sensitivity, to keep his heart open to the invisible, yet formative, world of values and nuances. Tagore's life appears to us as an ascending spiral, a necklace, where one bead does not just repeat the other, but it fulfils the other. There is of course an undercurrent of sequence, but it can be sensed only by one who has the insight to know the part in its total gestalt, and upon the context of a creative vitality of a person for whom all attaining is relatively small in comparison with what lies ahead and is yet to be attained. William James has told us of the 'Divine More' meaning thereby the divine working itself through in this world. Perhaps only a few mortals can be fit receptacles for the expression of this Divine More in man.

—Chitta Ranjan Das (1961), "Tagore: An Appreciation," p. 38.

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Chitta Ranjan: An Invitation to Adventure of Ideas and Relationships

Chitta Ranjan Das is a creative seeker, experimenter and perennial traveler who left his mortal body and undertook a new journey on Jan 16, 2011. Chitta Ranjan was born on Oct 3, 1923 in the Bagalpur village in undivided district of Cuttack in Odisha, India. Chitta Ranjan was part of many experiments, explorations, movements and *tapasyas—tapasyas* aimed at the multi-dimensional co-realizations of self and other and evolutionary transformations of consciousness, culture, society and the world.

Chitta Ranjan started writing at a young age but from the beginning his concerns were critical and embodied a deep seeking. One of his earliest writings is an essay on Socrates that Chitta Ranjan wrote in Oriya when he was a student at the Ravenshaw Collegiate school, Cuttack in the late 30s. His last book which was in press when he breathed his last is a book on Spinoza in Oriya which follows his earlier work on Spinoza in English. He had first written this as an undergraduate theses at Santiniketan in 1948 and in this Chitta Ranjan tells us:

> Rejection reduces man to the chrysalis cave of the Diogenian type of individualism; politically to his own interested group, and in morals, to his pet dogmas. The excellence, in the eyes of the modern age, lies in assimilation and acceptance, acceptance the whole of existence as it is. And Spinoza lives eternally as a minister of this spirit of reconciliation (Das 2009e: xii).

Chitta Ranjan started writing his diary at the age of 19 in 1942 and penned these towards the end of his waking life. His diaries are intimate doors into his life and works. What is probably unique in the whole world of self-reflection is that his diaries have been published as they are without any changes, whatsoever. Now they have been published in twenty-four volumes under

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the title *Rohitara Diary*, the diary of Rohita. Rohita is the name in the Upanishadic lore who is continuously drawn by the ideal "*Chareibeti, Chareibeti*": "Move On! Move On."

As a young student at Ravenshaw College, Cuttack Chittaranjan participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942 and was put behind the bars for three years in different jails including in Bangalore where he learnt Kannada in the jail. In jail he translated some works of Gandhi, wrote a book about our country called *Ei Mora Desha* (*This is My Country*, Das 2011) and also took to writing poems which later has been published as a collection as *Dui Adyaya* (Two Chapters). After his release from the jail in 1945 he realized that the freedom of the country was in the offing and went on to continue his learning at Santiniketan, the abode of Gurudev Tagore's *sadhana* and dreams. After studies, he plunged into research on the history, culture, religion and literature of Odisha. He wrote three monographs in the early 1950s at Santiniketan—*Studies in Medieval Religion and Society of Orissa*, *Odishara Mahima Dharma* ("The Mahima Dharma of Odisa") and *Achyutananda O Panchasaka Dharma* (Achyutananda and the Religion of the Panchasakhas) (Das 1951, 1952). These explorations helped Chitta Ranjan discover himself anew and, at the same time, to reinforce his convictions. These works also helped to build the newly established department of Odia at Visvabharati in the late 1940s. His perspectives on literature, culture and criticism are very much deepened by his dialogues with the two main protagonists of these studies—the tribal poet Bhima Bhoi and the saint poet Achyutananda Das. Bhima Bhoi has challenged all of us with his following lines: "*Praninka Arata Dukha Apramita Dekhu Dekhu Keba Sahu / Mo Jeevana Pachhe Narke Padithau Jagata Uddhara Heu*" (The life of beings is full of so much miseries and who can tolerate this on seeing / Let my own life be rather in hell and let the world live in happiness and escape from this misery (cf. Das

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2001c). Similar has been the aspiration of Chitta Ranjan with one addition: he believes that transforming the world is possible while making one's life a heaven of freedom and joy; and while striving to transform the world, one is not condemned to a hell. Secondly, Achyutananda Das had argued in the 16th century that one's primary identity is to be a *Shudra*, a servant, rather than to be a *Brahmana*. Achyutananda Das's ideal of servanthood as our primary identity before God and society has been another deep influence with Chittaranjan (Das 1992a). As he tells us in one of his last *Rohitara Diaries*: to be a Shudra is to be a hero and be of use to others and contribute to the evolutionary transformation of the world.

After his research at Santiniketan, Chitta Ranjan went to University of Copenhagen in Denmark in 1951 for further studies in psychology. During his stay there he took an active interest in the folk high school movement which was a unique movement in people's education. It was inspired by the visionary poet and pastor Grundtvig and pioneer in education Kristen Kold. Chitta Ranjan later wrote a biography of Kold in Oriya which has also been translated in to English (Das 2007e). He not only learnt Danish but also Finnish and had close association with students and teachers of folk high schools in Finland. During my last visit to Finland in 2004 I talked to participants of folk schools where Chitta Ranjan had gone and helped build some of these schools. His letters from Denmark were published as *Denmark Chithi* in early 1950s which have enkindled the hearts of a generation of Oriya readers (Das 1990).

Upon return from Denmark he started a school in an interior area of Odisha at Champattimunda in the district of Anugul which was an effort to bring together Gandhi's *nai taleem* (basic education) and insights from the Danish folk high school movement. He was there for four years and whatever he wrote there for students have been published as *Jeevana Vidyalaya* (The

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School of Life; Das 2002c) and *Jangala Chithi* (Letters from the Forest) (Das 1971; Its translation in English and Hindi has been published by National Book Trust, Delhi. see Das 2007f). Chitta Ranjan did not want this school to be part of the Governmental school system and wanted an autonomous process of evaluation for its students rather than being forced to take part in the Government Board Examination. Initially the Government had promised *Jeevana Vidyalaya* autonomy but with the change of ruling power configuration the education department of Odisha backtracked. Chitta Ranjan resigned from the school and came back to his village. After a while, he got an invitation to teach at Rural Institute at Bichpuri, Agra in the late 50s and was there for 15 years. He also spent a year as a visiting professor at International House in Sonnenberg, near Goettingen, Germany in 1962-63. There he learnt German. The International House had offered him a permanent position but realizing that he is more needed in India he came back to the Rural Institute, Agra. During this period, some of his works are—a collection of essays called *Taranga O Tadit* ("Waves and Lightning"), *Samaja: Parivarthan O Vikasha* ("Society: Change and Development"; Das 2004f) and *Shilatirtha. Silatirtha* is an epic work in prose describing Chitta Ranjan's journey in the Himalayan peaks and places of pilgrimage such as Badrinath and Kedaranath. This epic journey from the mountains follows his earlier heart-touching description and letters from his travel through the seas in such works as *Sagarajatri* (Traveler of the sea). He has also presented us his journey in the hills of Ganjam and Nepal as *Ganjam Malare Satadina* (Seven Days in the Hills of Ganjam) and *Nepala Pathe* (On the Way to Nepal) (cf. Das 1984, 1999c).

A perpetual wanderer that he is, Chitta Ranjan left Agra in the mid-70s and came back to Odisha to devote full time to the emergent movement of integral education in Odisha, inspired by the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He traveled around Odisha and spent time with community leaders, teachers

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and students of integral schools. He was also a great public intellectual and orator of Odisha. But he did not believe in speaking from the pulpit and spoke as a friend in circles of dialogues in colleges, literary meets, *pathachakras* (study circles) and public meetings. He also wrote regular columns in newspapers such as *Pragativadi* and *Sambad* and reflective essays in journals such as *Nabarabi*, *Eshana* and *Bartika*.[2]

Upon return to Odisha in early 70s, he gave some of his best works such as *Jatire Mu Jabana* (I am an Outsider by Caste), *Ma Nishada*, *Gandhi O Gopabandhu* (Gandhi and Gopabandhu), *Pashyati Dishi Dishi* (Looking All Around), *Odia Sahityara Sanskruika Vikashadhara* (The Cultural Development of Oriya Literature), *A Glimpse into Oriya Literature*, *Santha Sahitya* (The Literature of the Saints), *Nakha Darpanena* (Through Nails as Mirrors), *Sahitya O* ("Literature and..), *Ebam* ("And..") and others. In the first twenty years of his return to Odisha he also gifted us books on China and Israel based upon his travels to these countries. *Eretez Israel* is the title of his book on Israel. He had visited Israel in the early 1950s on his way back to India from Denmark and had met with Martin Buber, the great seeker and philosopher of dialogue. He had also visited and taught in the Kibbutz schools. He was happy to come back to Israel after thirty seven years in 1991 and his book on Israel brought these two journeys together. He was for peace in the Middle East and was greatly pained by the violence unleashed by the Jewish state as well as militant groups. In his book on China, *Bharataru Chin* (From India to China), a perpetual questioner that he is, he asks us: Hiuen Tsang came to India to study crossing the Himalayas but how many Indians went to study in China? (Das 1998). His book came out in 1988 just a year before the Tiananmen square but he was a bit uncritical in his description of and praise for China. During a discussion we had in 2010 he continued to look at the issue of Tibet from the Chinese standpoint.

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In this period he has also gifted us moving and critical biographies of political and spiritual leaders such as Nabakrushna Choudhury and Swami Vivekananda entitled respectively as *Shri Nabakrushna Choudhury: Eka Jibani* (Nabakrushna Choudhury: A Life, Cf. Das 1992e; This work is being published in English translation by NBT, Delhi) and *Vinna Jane Vivekananda: A Different Vivekananda* (cf. Das 1995).

Chitta Ranjan:

An Odyssey of Multi-Dimensional Creativity in the Last Two Decades

The above has provided a glimpse of Chitta Ranjan's *oeuvre* up to early 1990s. In the last two decades, Chitta Ranjan, undeterred by his growing age, has gifted us innumerable books—creative works, translations and biographies. He has recently written a moving biography of Biswanatha Patnaik, a radical Gandhian, who pioneered *bhu satyagraha—satyagraha* for land (Das 2009a) in Kujendri, Koraput in early 1950s. *Jangala Bhitaru Rasta* (Pathways from the Forest), presents Das's biography of this struggle as well as his reflections on violence and non-violence in the context of contemporary Maoist movements, struggle for land and dignity and grabbing of land by multinational corporations. In this Chitta Ranjan urges us to realize that while violence and non-violence are matters of principles and sometimes strategic considerations, the real challenge is realization of truth and dignity for all. Instead of just condemning the Naxalite and Maoist violent movements against the state and the oppressing classes, he urges us to realize the violence of the existing system of exploitation and violence on the part of those who tolerate it. He challenges us to realize that change for the underprivileged such as tribals of India can not be done either by bureaucratic state action or by philanthropic relief but by working together with our brothers and sisters as citizens with their full dignity and anger, anger at the continued system of

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oppression and exploitation.The challenge of social transformation in India lies in arousing the dignity and anger of citizens on the part of actors and movements who really want change and not to tolerate the existing indignity in the name of non-violence. Chitta Ranjan calls this *sahisnuta sataka* (hundred lines of tolerance), another variance of the age-old Indian tradition of *bairagya sataka* (hundred lines of renunciation). For Chitta Ranjan, neither tolerance nor escape from oppression but its courageous transformation through *satyagraha* is the need of the hour. As he writes reflecting upon the first land *satyagraha* in the country and the world: "The dignity of the citizen, the anger of the citizen! True servants would call for this realization of dignity and anger from the citizens" (Das 2009a: 198).

Chitta Ranjan challenges us to be angry with oppressive systems and relationships as they exist. In another of his collection of essays, *Brahma Tatilani Para* (The Brahma has heated up), he continues to express luminous anger at current indignities of life and society, an anger we find in fellow writers such as U.R. Ananthamurhty and Mahesweta Devi (Das 2004a). At the same time, while expressing anger Chitta Ranjan sometimes used harsh words and comments on others which was an expression of his ego rather than his seeking higher self. This created unease, anger and misunderstanding within some though Chitta Ranjan thought that in so doing he is doing the work of a Socratic gadfly and offering critique as a friend.

Sri Aurobindo and his spiritual co-traveler The Mother have been co-walkers with Chitta Ranjan in his aspiration and struggle over the last four decades. He has translated major works of Sri Aurobindo such as *The Human Cycles, Life Divine, Synthesis of Yoga and War and Self-Determination* into Oriya. He has also translated Collected Works of the Mother running up to sixteen volumes into Oriya. Recently, Chitta Ranjan has written four important works elaborating the vision and pathways of Sri Aurobindo and

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Mother —*Sataku Sata Ma* (Truly a Mother, 2005a), *Vira Jodha Kari* (On Being Heroic Warriors, 2006e)), *Purna Ekatara Yoga* (The Yoga of Fuller Unity, 2006f) and *Se Prastharu E Prasthaku* (From that Dimension To This, 2009b). He has dedicated himself to the integral education movement in Odisha as well as to the cause of heart-touching education in general. Some of his books in the field of education in the last two decades are *Purnanga Sikha* (Integral Education, 2003a) and *Sikhara Bibeka* (The Conscience of Education, 2006h).

For the last three decades Chitta Ranjan has also been involved with creative works for tribal development and education through Agragamee and Sikhasandhan—two voluntary organizations of Odisha working in these fields which he had nurtured from their beginning and all through. Chitta Ranjan translated many important books on education into Oriya such as Vasily Sukhomlynsky's *To Children I Give My Heart* translated into Oriya as *Mo Hrudaya Pilanka Pai* (Das 1997a), Leo Tolstoy's *Yasnaya Polyana* (Das 1998a) and *Letters to a Teacher* and A.S. Neil's *Hearts Not Heads in the School* translated into Oriya as *Jane Sikhakanku Chithi* (1996b) and *Bidyalayare Mastika Nuhe Hrudaya* (1999a). He has also written on Kristen Kold and Danish Folk High School Movement in Oriya entitled *Sikhare Krantikari Kristen Kold* (Das 2000) which has been translated by the present writer into English as *Kristen Kold: The Pioneer of Danish Folk High School Movement and a Revolutionary in Education* (Das 2007e).

Chitta Ranjan has also translated the classic work of Etienne De La Boitie's on *The Discourse of Voluntary* Servitude into Oriya as *Agya Palanara Rajaniti* (Das 2006c). Another creative work of translation as well as a work of new creation is Das's (2007a) *Chahara Kahanai* (The Story of Tea) which includes a translation of Kakuzo Ozakura's *The Book of Tea*. In the concluding chapter of this book Chitta Ranjan urges

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us to realize that while in Japanese tea ceremony the real objective as suggested in the Japanese philosophical attitude of *wabi* is one of feeling of emptiness, a place of rest and silence from the noisy external world, the real challenge now is to have ceremonies of vibrant sociality and soulful togetherness where we come closer to one another rather than escape from one another and the world.

Other important works of translation in this period are Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Wisdom of Sands* translated into Oriya as *Saudha Sandesha* (2001e), Barrows Dunham's *Man Against Myth* translated into Oriya as *Mithya Birudhare Manisha* (2008d) and Ananda K. Koomaraswamy's *Living Thoughts of Gotama The Buddha* translated into Oriya as *Gautama Buddhanka Amara Bicharachaya* (2009c). He has also translated Karl Gjellerup's Noble Prize winning novel *Pilgrim Kamanita* (1996c) as well Wladyslaw Stanislaw Reymont's Noble Prize winning novel *The Peasants* into Oriya as *Chashi* (1997c). He has also translated Ivan Turgeniv's *Rudin* in to Oriya (2008b). He has translated and recreated stories of Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar into Oriya as *Akhyana Manjari* (2006b) as he has written an inspiring biography of Vidyasagar entitled *Drustanta Purusha Iswara Chandra* (2006g). This work helps us realize how Vidyasagar by writing in Bengalee and focusing on grass-roots education and not only for westernization cultivated another path of Indian modernity other than the one carved out by valorized founders such as Ram Mohan Roy. *Rabindra Katipaya* (2009d) is a translation of the selected poems of Raindranath Tagore into Oriya and *Siksha: Manushyara Dharma* (Education: The Religion of Man, Das 2004e) is his translation of Tagore's book on education. These follow his earlier translation of some of Tagore's novels into Oriya such as *Two Sisters* (Das 2011d). He has also translated a collection of stories of Tagore (Das 2009f). These translations have appeared in the last two decades which

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build on his earlier creative works in translation and trans-creation into Oriya such as Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (2003b), Francois Mauriac's Galigai translated into Oriya as Sammohini (Das 2011a), Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *Little Prince* into Oriya as *Rajkumar* (Das 1972), Khalil Gibran's Prophet as *Mahabanab* (Das 1992d), the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as well as Bengalee novelist Ashapurna Devi's novel into Oriya as *Prathama Pratishuti.* The readers can note that like his creative works, Chitta Ranjan's translations also touch multiverse of concerns. Of social and economic concerns, he has translated economist Amit Bhaduri's *Development with Dignity* (Das 2006d) into Oriya as *Sammanara Saha Vikasha* and Harsh Mander's *Unheard Voices* into Oriya as *Kehi Suni Nahanti* (Das 2001f).

There was no stop to Chitta Ranjan's creativity and it is difficult to even read all his works what to speak of reviewing these or even joining him in a friendly contest of creative outpourings of one's own. He has also gifted us a bunch of creative flowers in this period. Of notable significance are the two alternative dictionaries he has created. *Sabda Sataka—Hundred Words* (1999a) presents creative rendering of the meaning of hundred words which are significant in the vision and practice of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother such as *atimanasa* (supramental). *Khya Ru A: Eka Byaktigata Avidhana* (From Khya to A: A Personal Dictinoary, 2005b) presents Das's interpretation of important words such as *parichaya* (identity). As an aspect of his characteristic creative radicalism Das's dictionary is not from A (which is the first letter in Oriya alphabet) into Khya (which is the last letter) but the other way around—from the last letter to the first.

Saba Mulare Manisha (Man is at the Root of All, 1997b) is an important work of Chitta Ranjan which sums of his abiding faith in man. In the same light we can welcome his most recent work on personality entitled *Byakti o Byaktitya* (2010). *Mahi Mandalara Gita* (2004b) is a study of the saint poet Sri Arkahita

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Das. *Chetana Bada Adua* (2007b) is a collection of his essays published in the Oriya daily Pragativadi where he has been writing regularly for the last three decades . Some other such collections are *Au Eka Drustire* (In Another Perspective, 1990, 2007d); *Charma Gharichi Sina* (The Skin Has been Affected, 2001b); *Jhauli Napada Kehi* (None of You Lose your Heart!); *Abhayam Amitrat* (No Fear from Non-Friends); *Preeti Hudile Bheeti* (When Love is Lost There is Fear, 2008a); and *Rajju Rajju, Bhujanga Bhujanga* (Rope Rope, Snake Snake, Das 2010d). Four volumes of his reflections on current affairs and world affairs that he had written as the guest editor of another Oriya daily *Dharitree* are also available as *Sampadakara Stabha* (The Columns of Editor; Das 2000c, 2001g, 2001h, 2005f). This is not to forget the publication of his diaries, *Rohitara Diary*, which has now touched twenty four volumes. In the same genres are a collection of his letters received from as well as written to friends. *Semanankara Chithi* (Their Letters, 2005d) is a collection of important letters that Chitta Ranjan had received from around the world and *Patrare Alapa* (Conversation Through Letters, 2004c) is a collection of his letters written to friends. *Suhrut, Parama Suhrut* (Friends, Great Friends, 2007c) also contains his letters to friends as well as his reflections on education and society.

Biswaku Gabakhya (Window to the World, 1994b) is a book of Chitta Ranjan which received Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award in 1994. *Odia o Odisha* is another book of him which received the prestigious Sarala Prize. *Biswa Parikrama* (Insights from the World, 2005c) is an edited book of Chitta Ranjan which contains creative summary of ten important works from around the world such as Albert Schweitzer's *Philosophy of Civilization* and Eric Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*. *Americaru Asili* (I came from America, 2001a) is a travelogue of Chitta Ranjan about his journey in the United States of America. *Ananbana Rachana* (Miscellaneous Writings, 1998d) is yet another important

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collection of his essays. *Chidbistara* (Expansion of Consciousness, 2001d) is a collection of his essays of on literature. *Prabandhara Pruthivi* (The World of Essays, 2006a) is Chitta Ranjan's reflections on writing essays as an aspect of one's commitment to describing and transforming social reality for which he finds the existing style and substance of poetry in Oriya literature inadequate. *Manaku Stiri Besa Kari* (Making One's Mind a Woman, 2008c) is yet another important work of Chitta Ranjan on life, society and literature which urges us to embody the art of creative pregnancy in our life and relationships. This pleads for a new art of human realization going beyond the dualism of the masculine and the feminine.

Reflections on Society, Culture and Personality

Chitta Ranjan wrote on an extraordinary range of issues and traveled through fields of learning and engagement such as philosophy, literature, history, education, sociology, anthropology, religious studies, cultural studies and psychology with ease. He always kept his doors and windows open and was remarkably update on recent scholarship in these fields. He had studied Psychology at University of Copenhagen and taught sociology and social sciences at the Rural Institute, Agra as well as a visiting professor in Germany and Israel. In his seeking he sought to bring philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology and spiritual seeking together.

Let us listen to Chitta Ranjan's reflections on challenges in some of these fields of studies and engagement. To begin with the field of anthropology, Chitta Ranjan challenges us to go beyond the accepted grammar of participant observation: "One can always observe without being a participant; but when you are a participant, you can participate and observe at the same time without becoming conscious that you are observing" (Das forthcominga: 111). About sociology Chitta Ranjan shares with us the following:

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The story of all real sociology is one of breaking open the boundaries. The discipline was originally bound strictly to its specific lines and limitations, and it is great that transgressions have been happening all the time. It is becoming more and more clear that society, people, do always matter more than the study of society. The older definitions and contours are fast changing and there are more and more people who are less shy and hence willing to transgress the boundaries. More mature days are in the offing and the recluses till now working in the laboratories are becoming more courageous. Yes, courage, more than anything else, always helps us to ask questions and rewrite our canons of enquiry. Intellectuals are rethinking and as it were from within more ready to revise their roles. Albert Camus has once made a remark that the intellectual's role will be to say that the king is naked when he is and not to go into raptures over his imaginary trappings. And look, all around now there are hegemonies, kings all round who are visibly naked! The intellectual's laboratory has now to come down in proximity to people where they really are, move and have their beings, suffer all the time waiting for an appropriate remedy. The academics could not as a rule do that. Shri Ramakrishna of India had once observed that "some people climb the seven floors of a building and cannot get down." But some can, he did hope, really climb and then come down. They are always of greater worth (Das 2009f: 579-580)

Chitta Ranjan warns us to not to be a slave of methodolatry in the name of methods:

Methods, in whatever we study, pertains to what has come now to be known as methodology. But the importance of following a methodology should not tempt us what may be a methodolatry. Methods are useful, but they are

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not sacrosanct. Science degenerates to scientism, if we are almost morbidly keen about prescribed methods, according to Viktor Frankl, the logotherapist. In the same way Frankl seems to warn us about psychologism, sociologism and the like. Thus, when one happens to go over-serious about methods, one does run the risk of deviating into grim sociologism. Then methods become frontal and conspire to take us away from our real footings. In the academic echelons, one's earnestness about a theme is sometimes assessed by what methods he uses. In the social sciences also, some people give greater importance to the methods employed than the theme or themes being actually dealt with. And, a scientific methodology is even at times taken for having greater importance than a scientific attitude.

Once upon a time, during the middle ages, the geometrical method was the approved criterion. The vogue has changed in several ways till date, fortunately. Yet, some still continue to believe that the scientific method only can lead us to certainty. It is alleged that Martin Luther of the Protestant Movement was greatly disturbed about Erasmus of Rotterdam, because, to him, the latter was so uncertain. He protested once saying: What is more like accursedness and damnation than uncertainty, and what is more blessed than certainty? As an antidote and decidedly more appropriate to the state of the world today, would be what Krishnamurty of India has observed, 'If you start with certainty, you end up with uncertainty'. The world is so one-dimensional and unbending today because people, especially those who are obsessed about their own fond idiosyncrasies and the methods accruing from them, would never agree to give way to other approaches and other primaries. Such people in the academics tend to

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take cover under a constructed understanding of unity, as India's Sri Aurobindo would characterize it. Instead, he would suggest a more wholesome way to decipher and go by a diversity in unity. The Unity is one and it has to be sought after in divers ways. They may seem to be contrary to one another, but they are complementary. This is the right scientific method and will give us the real insights (ibid).

In the mid-1960s Chitta Ranjan published a book on sociology and social change in Oriya named *Samaja: Paribartana o Vikasha* (Society: Development and Change). He has recently gifted us a book in the field of psychology on the theme of personality but this work is not merely academic psychology as it brings together his lifelong maturation in the fields of philosophy, literature and spiritual seeking (Das 2010a). In this work he urges us to realize that personality is an emergent wholeness in man which emerges as part of an incessant quest; it is not to adapt to things as they are especially when society and external environment is not conducive to realization of his or her potential. To be a person is not just to adapt to a society if it is sick and pathological but to try to change it. Chitta Ranjan challenges the acceptable definition of normality, pathology and therapy. Building upon Abraham Maslow's concept of metapathology and higher grumbling, he urges us to grumble at the existing ugliness, indignity and desecration of life. Chitta Ranjan's call for a new realization of personality which would also contribute to realization of society as a healthy wholeness by first realizing its pathology and sickness also finds a resonance in many creative thinkers, for example, in the recent work of Axel Honneth of the critical theory tradition in Europe. As Honneth (2007: 34, 35, 37, emphasis added) tells us:

> In order to speak of a social pathology [..] we require a conception of normality related to social life as a whole. The immense difficulty involved in this project has

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> been made evident by the failure of social-scientific approaches that have sought to fix the functional requirements of societies solely through external observations. Since what counts as a developmental goal or as normality is always culturally defined, it is only by a hermeneutic reference to a society's self-understanding that social functions of their disorders can be determined. Thus we may have a defensive possibility of speaking of social pathologies within a culturally contingent notion of normality, since we can limit ourselves to an empirical description of what a given culture regards as a disorder. [..] *A paradigm of social normality must, therefore, consist in culturally independent conditions that allow a society's members to experience undistorted self-realization.* [..] The question then becomes crucial whether it is a communitarian form of ethical life, a distance-creating public sphere, non-alienated labor or a mimetic interaction with nature that *enables individuals to lead a well-lived life.*

In the above lines, Honneth tells us about the need for realizing "culturally independent conditions" which facilitate "undistorted self-realizations." This also resonates with Chitta Ranjan's approach to culture and cultural creativity. Chitta Ranjan looks at culture as the eye of a society, an eye which looks at existent social reality creatively and critically. Culture is a perennial seeking of values and a striving for dignified human relationships. Culture is a source of inspiration for continued blossoming and realization of potential of self and society. Chitta Ranjan calls it *prerana*—inspiration— and contrasts this with the concept, organization and appropriation of culture as *sampatti*, property. Chitta Ranjan considered it pathological and launched a blistering attack on individuals and institutions when they make culture a property of the few and for the few.

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Chitta Ranjan:

A *Sadhana* of Commitment to Self and Social Transformations

Chitta Ranjan interrogated existing structures, institutions and grammars of society calling them pathological and taking part in manifold experiments and projects which would create spaces, institutions and conditions for fuller self-realization of individuals and society. As he had written more than sixty years ago in his work on Spinoza:

> Our inventions of power have recoiled upon us in the form of dreadful wars and killings. Our unending additions to the amenities of life bring us everything but happiness. Our mind has been a victim to abnormality, there is disease and decay all around, there is mutual ill feeling and hatred in all our walks in society. And what is the way out of all this dirt and dross? How can we learn the art of being men? By being more human. By tolerance, by understanding, by accepting the whole world of existence. By coming together, meeting together and working together (Das 2009e: xi)

Chitta Ranjan's life was a *sadhana* of bringing seeking souls together for self, co-realizations and building alternative movements and institutions for social transformations. He took part in, pioneered and nurtured the integral education movement of India. He also nurtured voluntary organizations such as Agragamee and Sikshashandhan who have been groups with a difference in our country, not afraid to question the status quo on policies of industrialization, tribal development and education. While Agragamee works on dignity among tribals and has been with the people of Kashipur in their battle against mining companies and has been victim of governmental atrocities having been once banned by the State Government, Sikshasandhan works in the field of education including tribal

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education continuing with some of the educational visions of Chitta Ranjan. He has also nurtured literary, cultural and research organizations such as The Universe (Institute of Orissan and Oriental Stduies at Cuttack) and *Odisa Gabeshana Parishada* (Institue of Oriya Studies, Cuttack). As a pioneering member of the Universe, he has organized many international seminars on such themes as Buddhism and Jainism, Folk Culture and "Gandhi and Modern Times." He has also edited a multi-volume work on "Folklore of Mankind" from The Universe to which folklorists from all over the world have contributed. He knew personally participants in alternative thinking and movements around the world such as Sunderlal Bahuguna of the Chipko movement, Sarala Behen (the disciple of Gandhi working in the Himalayas), Eric Fromm and Victor Frankl, the founder of logotherapy or soul therapy school in psychoanalysis.

Of the groups he co-nurtured and co-created mention must also be made of *Suhrut Gosthi* (Group of Friends) and *Nabapallava* (New Buds). *Suhrut Gosthi* is a group of friends who meet twice a year during summer and winter in an integral school of Odisha and work together such as building a pond or house for the school and reading the works of Sri Aurobindo together. This began in the summer of 1984 in the integral school in Markona and since then it has continued uninterrupted. The last meet was in an integral school in Parjang near Dhenkanal from December 22 to December 31, 2010 and Chitta Ranjan spoke with the participants over phone from his hospital bed. In this meet participants also read Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* along with Sri Aurobindo's *Human Cycles*. *Suhrut Gosthi* has provided an alternative space for self and co-realizations and for co-learning with joy for seeking souls unencumbered by trappings of power and authority.[3]

Nabapallava also meets twice a year in the summer and winter where children come together and share their creativity with each

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other in the company of adults who also co-create with children as children. Chitta Ranjan had pioneered this children's meet and took part in every sessions of it until his health permitted. *Nabapallava* is a living embodiment of Chitta Ranjan's life-long participation with the well-being of children whom he considered friends. This is also an occasion to note his immense contribution to children's literature in Oriya and for creating a cultural climate for giving respect and dignity to children in everyday interactions, families, schools and the public sphere. He wrote for and related to children not only as an adult and a teacher but as a fellow playing child. He kept alive the seeking and playful child in him as well as those who came in contact with him. He wrote on children' rights from the perspective of children. But for him children did not mean only those who come or are capable of coming to school but many who toil to earn a living for themselves and their parents. He challenged us to realize the predicament of all children in talking about right to education, children's rights and literature for children. He did not believe only in learning in the boundaries of the school and urged us to create conditions where children can labor and learn together. For him this is especially urgent for children who labor. He was also for creating common schools where children from all backgrounds, rich or poor, would study together.[4]

The above creativity of Chitta Ranjan in creating and nurturing spaces, groups and institutions for co-realizations embodied his life of commitment. But this commitment was neither an imposed one nor was it fixed. He pursued his commitments with grace and humour.[5] Chitta Ranjan spoke of commitment in self, society and literature but urged us to realize that along with the journey of the self and maker of literature, this commitment also attains new heights and discovers new depths. Chitta Ranjan warns us that in the name of commitment we should not be stuck somewhere on the path of our life. For Chitta Ranjan, self, society and literature is a *sadhana*: "*Sadhana*

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refers to a process of transcendence. In the process of transcending from one step to the next in the inner path of our life literature can become at once a means as well as a companion" (1989a: 183).

Chitta Ranjan: A Friend of the World

Chitta Ranjan is a worshipper of life where any movement, experiment, social struggle and *tapasya* adoring and enhancing human dignity is dear to his heart. His critical engagements are always enriched by such a global conversation, a personal immersion and intimacy with global cosmography, a *Brahmanda Bhugola*, as Balaram Das, the saint poet of Odisha, would have it.

Chitta Ranjan was a polyglot at ease in more than dozen languages such as Danish, Finnish, Sanskrit, German, Bengalee and Hindi. He related to and cultivated languages as a medium of expansion of human heart. As he writes in one of his letters to his student and co-traveler Ramesh Ghode: "A language, for me, is not a structure of words and dead grammar, it is a passport to the literature written in that language, and it is a passport to the hearts of a people that speak that language. [..] Learning languages is a means to extend your heart so as to hold everyone, the whole world in its fold" (Ghode 2010: 19). But though he read and wrote in many languages such as English and German, he chose to devote himself to creating a literature of knowledge and awakened prose in Oriya on many subjects. While most of the post-independent Indian intellectuals write and wrote solely in English, Chitta Ranjan continued to challenge us with his multiversal creativity to realize the injustice and violence that we are doing to ourselves and to our brothers and sisters by not creatively expressing ourselves in our mother languages. For Chitta Ranjan, it is an aspect of the betrayal of dreams that were dreamt in freedom movement of our country and by pioneers of alternative Indian modernities such as Iswara Chandra Visyasagar from Bengal and Fakir Mohan Senapati from

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Odisha and by seekers such as Gandhi and Tagore who wrote in their mother languages along with their unique creative modes of expression in other languages such as English and Sanskrit. Chitta Ranjan not only wrote more than two hundred books in Oriya but he continued to emphasize the significance of teaching and learning in one's mother language. Sikshadandhan embodies this philosophy of his and tries to teach tribal children in their respective mother languages.

Chitta Ranjan is a friend of the world. But the world to him was not impersonal, he cultivated deep personal friendships with innumerable souls around the world—Odisha, Kerala, Denmark, Finland, Germany, USA and around. K. Viswanathan, the founder of Mitraniketan, Vellanad, Kerala and a great Gandhian and social activist of India shares with us the following:

> Chittada is a genius in many fields of human development. My acquaintance with him goes back to 1940s, when I joined Shantiniketan as a young student [..]We got to know each other better and from this time stems our friendship. He, too, was a habitual wearer of Khadi and he also took up spinning. Living in the hostel himself, he also looked after the newcomers, helping them wherever he could to adjust themselves to the routine of life in Shantiniketan. He was very gentle, simple, friendly and soft-spoken and even at that age he had a scholarly look.
>
> [..] In the formative period of my work in the village of Vellanad, he was kind enough to spend some time with our group. Later, some of his students, who were fortunate to study under his guidance, also visited me in Mitraniketan (the name of my Centre) and from the impression I gained of them, I could judge how valuable his influence on them was as a guide, a friend and philosopher and how it moulded their lives and

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> outlook. When I started my programme of integrated development education in Mitraniketan, I longed very much to have Chittada associated with this work. He has, no doubt, all this time been associated with it and continues to influence us with his thinking and even with his presence, whenever I ask for it and the advice of this silent worker, profound thinker and prolific writer has always been invaluable. I also know him as an excellent letter writer, always very prompt and regular in his correspondence.
>
> [..] Chittada has, so far, as I know, not published much in English and it appears to me that he intends to impart the knowledge accumulated in his life-time to enrich his own mother-tongue. Hence he has done a considerable amount of writing in Oriya. However, generally speaking, his ideals and outlook on life are universal, although at present he is working mainly in his immediate environment. As a multi-linguist, he is capable of writing in English and the major Indian and European languages as well. We hope, he will spare the time to put his valuable ideas at least into English also, so that he could then influence a larger section of humanity in India and abroad through his writings (Das forthcoming a: 151-153).

Eaghor G. Kostesky who lives in Germany and to whose Ukranian translation of *Gitanjali* Chitta Ranjan had written a foreword tells us:

> He was not only interested in Europe as an alien country [..] He came to a deeper contact [..] he sometimes even idealized the Europe of his friends, once feeling at Christmas as if he were with them "trying to revive the ever-live inspirations of the birth of Christ, singing round and meditating upon the Christmas tree", as he wrote to my wife and me (probably in 1966 - the date of that aerogramme is no

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longer identifiable). "Though the practical and the logical in me induces me to be pessimist about how we face in our world and with one another, my heart persuades me to believe in it and heartens me up to encouragement. This heartening gives me hope, the energy required to live one's life as a dedication, as an act of supreme and all-embracing identification. And apart from all the institutional gloss and glamour, is not the life of Christ an example of a life offered, a life regained by offering? And can we eliminate hate from the world as long as we do not accept life as an offering? Of course, I do not mean that we have to be fanatics to do that." Already in 1965 Chitta Ranjan had asked for an English biography of the Polish teacher Janusz Korczak (1878-1942), that shining example in offering his life, even physically.

[..] I have known Chitta Ranjan as a thinker, a man of letters who is versed in a lot of languages, a promoter of education and of social reforms, who has been working for the day, "when persons will decide the behaviour of their governments and not vice versa" (his letter dated Nov. 4th, 1965), besides however as a human being peculiarly connected with nature. Rather significant seems to me his love of snow, mentioned by him several times: "The white in nature touches some depth in me, that which aspires to be as clean, pure and white as snow. The warmth of this inner feeling takes away all consciousness about the cold from me." (Dec. 12th, 1962). "The winter is "in no way less beautiful than the summer here, and is perhaps more healing for the soul. I have always had a fascination for snow, not simply because of its white appearance, but because of the depth it touches within me, an aspiration, a solitude, a peculiar feeling of nearness." (Feb. 15th, 1963) (Das forthcominga: 154-155).

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Ramesh Ghode taught Sociology at Hilsop College, Nagpur and in the preface to the collection of letters that Chitta Ranjan had written to him and he has edited, Rameshda tells us:

> We 'discovered' each other in the All India Conference of Sociology Teachers from Rural Institutes all over India. [..] The conference was held in the last week of November, 1960 in Rural Institute, Amravati [..] I was then a student of 2nd year [..] I had a chance to speak on a sociological concept of social disorganization in that conference. After having delivered my lecture on the concept all the eminent scholars of Sociology cross-examined me by asking pertinent questions, including Professor Chitta Ranjan Das. I could feel the depth of empathy in his eyes. During that short encounter with him, he asked me several questions to glean my personal profile, family background and interest in academic pursuits. I frankly shared all the personal information with him.
>
> I perceived in him a Guru, a preceptor and an elder brother who would guide me in academic pursuits. As luck would have it, he immediately said in a soft tone, "Ramesh, do not call me Sir, you can call me 'Dada,' and I mean it in real sense of thought and action." Hearing his words I was spellbound and could not believe myself. I saw in him a Guru, elder brother, a friend, philosopher and a guide. I was convinced within that he would help me not only to tide over all the obstacles in my academic ventures but direct me in the right path of life too. Our camaraderie and kinship commenced and it was to to be a sincere and life-long commitment (Ghode 2010: iii-iv).

For the last fifty years Chitta Ranjan and Rameshda grew together and what Chitta Ranjan wrote to Rameshda on January

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30, 1961, the day of martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi, is an invitation for adventure in creativity for all of us concerned:

> I will not let you roll in a bed of roses. I will try with all my resources to completely disorganize you at your present level, so that you make for an organization at a much higher level. You need not be upset by your economic worries. Please tell me the minimum you require to keep your body and mind fit to work and Chittada will gladly see to it. [..]
>
> To use less and less things does not make one great. Only great aspirations, great determination and great efforts make one so. [..] You should not always worry about your wants, you should not think yourself inferior to and your must in no way be dirty. And then only you can be ready for greater things. Then only the bud in you will open to a full blossom. And there should not be any room for any kind of fear. Know that I am always with you. Please believe me, during the last two months, even five minutes have never passed when I have not thought about, and longed back to see you and wished to be of some use to you.

A New Morning and Mourning with Chitta Ranjan: Adventures in Co-Realizations and World Transformations

Chitta Ranjan believed in continued non-dual realizations and he did not believe in light to the exclusion of darkness. For him, darkness is the womb from which light emerges. Still Chitta Ranjan, like many of us, had a deep love for morning. He enjoyed morning walks with friends and many of us around the world have walked with him in many mornings. Henry David Thoreau, a source of inspiration to both Gandhi and Chitta Ranjan, tell us that while walking we "must walk like a camel [..] which ruminates when walking " (Thoreau 1975: 596). While walking with Chitta Ranjan we walked like camels ruminating and arguing along the way.

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Chitta Ranjan had subtitled the second volume of his autobiography *Mitrasya Chakusa* as *dwitiya sakala*—second morning and the third as *sakala pare sakala* (morning after morning). In these he writes that many a day he remembers the rising sun that he had witnessed in many parts of the world such as in the hills of Mitraniketan, Kerala. On the morning of January 17, 2011 while walking to board a plane home from Delhi to Chennai and looking at the radiant sun I was thinking of a new morning with Chitta Ranjan in which we walk together with him in his manifold experiments and adventures of co-realizations and world transformations. Chitta Ranjan has left many untracked paths for us to walk with and works to complete. We mourn with Chitta Ranjan in this new morning in creative ways by giving ourselves to the tasks of transformations that he had envisioned for himself and for ourselves and the world. As he asks us in one of his last books, "Our world is full of doctrines but where is sraddha [love and reverence]? *Sraddha* for life and an immeasurable *sraddha* for our world!" (2011b: 272). We walk and work with him in cultivating creative pathways of transformations in self, culture, literature, society and the world and make this fragile of home of ours, our Mother Earth, a place of beauty, dignity and dialogues. As we walk with Chitta Ranjan in this new morning we can remember what he had written to Rameshda on January 30, 1961:

> This is a very precious day, Ramesh. The death of Gandhiji has a message of devotion to a richer life in it. Let both of us grow up to that richer life, let us not look for anything less than that (Ghode 2010: 23).[6]

Endnotes

[1] This builds upon my introduction to Chitta Ranjan Das, *On the Side of Life Inspite Of* (forthcoming). I am grateful to Professor Manoranjan Mohanty, Mr. Anil Pradhan and Professor Jatindra Kumar Nayak for their comments and encouragement.

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[2] *Eshana* is the mouth piece of *Odisha Gabeshana Parishada* which Chitta Ranjan had co-nurtured for the last thirty years and in its pages he has written many essays on such important themes as aesthetics and existentialism. Similarly he has published regularly in *Bartika*, his last essay in October 2010 issue of Bartika was on "Gautama Buddha O Odisha" (Gautama Buddha and Odisha). Even in his advanced age he wrote not only on his philosophy but published critical essays in appreciation of other fellow seekers such as the poet Brahmananda Das and essayist Baikunthanatha Ratha in the pages of *Bartika*.

[3] Chitta Ranjan believed in learning with each other with ease and a sense of playfulness. What the great German philosopher Gadamer writes about Goethe, the great German poet, is also helpful to understand Chitta Ranjan and his method of co-learning with joy: "learning for him took place as a spontaneous activity of personal development. [..] For Goethe, learning was play because it always brought into play all forces of his being" (Gadamer 1994: 4).

Chitta Ranjan believed in creating alternative groups where members could speak with each other and share their hearts and minds without fear and co-learn with joy. In the evening meetings of Shuhrut work cum and study camps participants share their stories and reflections. Chitta Ranjan believed in building groups and institutions which are based upon friendship. What Dasgupta (2011) writes about Tagore that he wanted to build "friendly institutions" in a context which was marked by hierarchies applies to Chitta Ranjan as well. To understand the significance of his approach to group dynamics and to look it as an instance of creative group therapy, the following lines of Lois Holzman, herself a creative practitioner of group work helps us: "[..] people come to appreciate what (and that) they can create, and simultaneously to realize the limitations of trying to learn, grow and create individually. If and as the group comes to understand this, members (at different moments) realize that *growth comes from participating in the process of building the groups in which one functions. The group grows itself*"(Holzman 2011: 12; emphasis added). We can read these lines

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together with what Chitta Ranjan has written about the process of taking part in experiments in integral schools: "One liberates oneself by collaborating with a liberating process and that is perhaps how we all collaborate in the march of this world of ours" (Das forthcomingb).

[4] As he writes in his essay, "Rights of the Child and Literature for Children":

> When one says rights of the child one definitely means all children, including those who do not come to our schools and hence our books are not accessible to them. [..]
>
> There are children in our society who have to work in order that they may earn a pittance for their parents. These do not have any childhood worth the name and have to assume adult responsibilities. Their counterparts in the schools, the more fortunate, should learn through our books written for them to appreciate what the former have been doing since generations. These are already contributing their mite to society before society has really done anything for them. In that respect a child who works and is out of school deserves more approbation and regard than the ones who are in school learning and being provided for. Let the child at school be aware of those outside school, be told that this has to change, and discriminations have to go.
>
> Last, but not the least, we shall try to give our children in India comparative accounts of how children grow up in other societies, in societies where all children go to the same kind of school and grow up as equals. Talent and merit are always given recognition and how far a child can go up in his pursuits does not depend on how much money its parents happen to have or how low or high the latter are placed in the corporate life. The writer will know and discover how best he or she can give literary forms to these notions, ideals and aspirations. All attempts at sermonizatioin will fail here also. And above all, the writer himself must be able to believe in what he puts down in writing for children (Das forthcominga).

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[5] Speaking humour, Chitta Ranjan was a man of humour in life and literature. His works have made an immense contribution to creating not only a literature of satire but also creative and transformative humour. I thank Milli Apa of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry for reminding me of this aspect of Chitta Ranjan's life and works.

[6] Speaking about richer life which Chitta Ranjan mentions in this letter, we can again get helpful cues about richer life as an artistic and creative life in the following lines of Gadamer written about Goethe which also resonate with the life and works of Chitta Ranjan:

> Goethe himself saw, in his basically creative relation with the world, not the particularity of his poetic individuality, but rather the generality of all human existence. The artist is simply the human being raised to a higher power (Gadamer 1994: 16).

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2 Knowing the Unknown: A Search for Homage to Chitta Ranjan

O.P. Bhasin

I had an occasion to visit Odisha in July, 1992 at instance of Utkal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Cuttack. I shared this with Dr. Ananta Kumar Giri, then working at G.B.Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad, who was kind enough to suggest and arrange my meeting Chitta Ranjan during my stay at Cuttack. I did this only on July 18, 1992 at his residence in Bapuji Nagar, Bhubaneswar.

At the appointed time, I found Chitta Ranjan waiting for me at the entry point of his house. He escorted me to his modestly furnished sitting room. We sat for a while when silence only spoke. We kept looking at and through each other's eyes, with no actuation for oral communication. A little later, Chitta Ranjan broke the silence: "Haven't we known each other? No matter if we haven't met hitherto." On an affirmative reply for me, we both instantaneously got up, held each other's hands, and with an ecstatic smile experienced warmth of a closely held hug. To hitherto unknown mortals sat down as old intimate friends eager to know each other!

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At my request, Chitta Ranjan gave me a peep into his long journey of life, covering his vast and varied areas of interest pursued without any geographical limitation. A soft and gentle voice overcoming the natural inhibition of self-speaking, he perceived my unexpressed appetite and opened before me his whole life span like a book. It was indeed a very touching and illuminating experience for me. The air in the room was full of human warmth and we were totally at ease.

It was now my turn to share with Chitta Ranjan whatever little about me was there. My lone audience evinced lot of interest and wished to know more details. We then delved deep into what human life is all about, its purpose and how to handle its vagaries. Covering various aspects and stages in this sojourn we touched upon the role of 'Pursharatha' and 'Prarabdha', the theory of Karma, Nature's place in our actions and how positive and negative emotions determine course of events in our lives. While in this realm, Chitta Ranjan shared how he had been in search of his real identity as a human being. Despite his deep commitment to improvement in quality of life and devotion to the concept of service to the society, deep down in his heart he would still experience of Reality as Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi had, although he was also clear that such level cannot be reached through comprehension but through experience only, to be had in and through this life. Here, he recognized the limitations of intellectualism and of being a scholar, and endeavoured to seek a way out. I then brought out the experience of Sri Aurobindo who heard Vivekananda's voice giving clarity and guidance to him as seeker of truth. His practice of purity and piety in his life world determine his reaching the goal. Life of Swami Rama Tirtha, a 'grihasthi,' married with two children, was an example in this regard. The relevant point is practice of detachment in attachment and of renunciation in, and not of, the world. This indeed is a

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formidable challenge but still practicable. The thought sharing then veered around what is purity and what is piety in relation to day-to-day life of a normal human being. Continued search seemed to be the only way out, but when and how the finale would be experienced was yet outside the domain of human effort. For all this, one life as unit of time might not be necessarily enough.

By now, we had reached the end of the scheduled duration of our meeting. I got up after one and a half hours of our togetherness and sought leave of this embodiment of humanity and loftiness. He came to the exit door of his house and with folded hands we bade good bye to each other, with four moist eyes the only witness to this celestial phenomenon.

We never met again. Dr. Giri came to meet me at my residence in New Delhi on January 16, 2011, when on my enquiring about Chitta Ranjan, he broke the news of his passing away on that very day a couple of hours before he entered my house: the one who introduced me to Chitta Ranjan also broke the news of his leaving this world! A great son of India! My prayers for grant of peace to his illumined soul!

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Professor Chitta Ranjan Das

3

Gideon M. Kressel

At first I met Professor Chitta Ranjan Das in an international conference in Cuttack, Orissa, in December 1988 . We exchanged opinions about the talks we heard together while we were waiting in the queue for lunch. On listening to me, to my surprise, Professor Das located my Hebrew background. Chitta was then in his early 70s, and recalled the Hebrew accent thanks to a term of months he spent in Israel back in 1953. This was a time of austerity that prevailed shortly after the Israel War of Independence in 1947-1948 and spread until mid 1950s.

That time, while in his early thirties, Chitta arrived in Israel being led by three main objectives. First, to be of help for those peace minded elements amongst both, Arabs and Jews, the two nations in combat in search of an agreement that will replace the truce between them. Second, to follow and understand the spread of the Old-New Hebrew on becoming Israel's lingua franca. And third to learn the secrets of the voluntary practice of socialism, that he saw and experienced while living in a Kibbutz. The Kibbutz school and its pedagogical methods were perhaps his main concern.

Chitta told me of several individuals who impressed him most, with whom he corresponded for years. Among them were Mr. Martin Buber, the Jerusalem professor and world known philosopher, and with Mr. M. Kharief, a Kibbutz member and a

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political leader, who was later on elected for a Knesset (Parliament) member of the Labor Party. Chitta retained the contact with them and with several other Israelis with whom he exchanged views and ideas on both, world and local (Middle Eastern) affairs. Our conversation, therefore, had instantly reached a broad number of topics that were of our mutual interest and concern.

The correspondence between us following the Cuttack event went on during 1989 and 1990 and helped us bring Professor Chitta Ranjan Das to visit Israel again, this time as a guest of the J. Blaustein Institute for Desert Studies of Ben-Gurion University of Beerseva. Some forty years after his first encounter with the newly founded Israel and its burning schedules, Chitta questioned again the country's constraints and its people's concerns and found that a lot has changed. He used his time with us intensely, renewing contact with old acquaintances and revisited them and the communities he knew. On hearing his voice through the telephone, most people recalled him and his early arrival and were just waiting to receive him again, and he returned to see them.

Chitta used his time a lot; his visits included a term spent in Moshav Nevatim, in the Negev, that was founded by emigrants from Kochin. As well he reached families of Benei Israel, the Mumbai Jews in their dwellings at Be'er Sheva and in Mesilat Zion. Of a special interest for him was a reunion with members of Kibbutz Ma'abaroth, "his Kibbutz" then. To his surprise, he remembered quite a number of people in this Kibbutz by names and likewise, he was identified by the Kibbutz elders who did not forget the "early version" of the acquisitive young man, who came the long way from India to ask those 'big questions' that concerned their world view, as compared to the way they were back in 1951.

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People were glad to host Chitta and spent hours talking with him, discussing all that had passed since his previous visit. Chitta took notes of the things he heard, then sat to analyze and write about them to sum up the change he saw in process.

It had occurred that on the last days of January 1990, when Professor Chitta Ranjan Das sat with us, writing his materials, the Gulf war broke and Iraqi missiles sent by Sadam Husain's army reached Israel. Sounds of alarm were heard these days and nights and forced us into shelters. I apologized for this inconvenience to my noble guest who solicited me saying: "Both you and me regret for him [Mr. Sadam Husain] the doing of things as such."

We kept the exchange of ideas between us though less so over the last years, and shall remember Professor Chita Ranjan Das, the noble scholar and pedagogue soul for ever.

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Chitta Bhai: An Incorrigible Optimism

4

Aurobindo Behera

When we think of a person of stature, or a person we love, we try to put him or her in a category or class. For example, we label such a person as a good teacher, a good writer, a good scholar, a good social worker, a good friend and so on. Thus, it is often possible to identify the defining characteristics of a person. However, when it comes to categorise a person like Sri Chitta Ranjan Das, the task is far from easy and presents special difficulties. Ever since I met Sri Das, in the seventies of the last century, I have tried to fathom his personality and accomplishments, and never with success, nor to, at least, my satisfaction. He was a thinker, writer, educationist, social worker and a humanist, who could relate as spontaneously to children as to the elderly.

Sri Chitta Ranjan Das was an intellectual who could feel at ease with people of all age groups, people belonging to all faiths and persuasions and people with diverse educational and economic backgrounds. Therefore, to everyone he was the favourite 'Chitta Bhai'. He could spend hours with children without getting bored or the children feeling intimidated. He could spend days with young and not so young volunteers at a work camp without betraying the slightest sign of fatigue or boredom. Similarly, he could go on discussing literature and philosophy with writers and thinkers in Odisha and outside with equal aplomb.

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Sri Das was perhaps one of the most widely read persons of Odisha, consumed by an insatiable appetite for books of all kinds: on philosophy, education, sociology, literature and so on. With a flair for learning many languages he could savour books in their original languages like German and Danish.

Sri Das was also a free thinker and worked wholeheartedly for a system of education which fosters free thinking. His early association with the Forest School at Champatimunda and his most recent latest association with the schools of Integral Education were experiments with a paradigm which gave primacy to creative thinking as opposed to the rigidities which fetter normal school education. He not only made himself familiar with all kinds of innovative education, he perhaps wanted to get into the spirit of those systems during his sojourns in Denmark, Israel and around the world. He had a vision of equality of educational opportunities for all and was most strident and consistent in attaining equity for all even at the risk of appearing to be repetitive.

Chitta Bhai's books such as *Sila Tirtha* (A Pilgrimage to the Himalayas) and *Raj Kumar* (the Oriya translation of St. Exupery's *Little Prince*) left a deep impression on our formative minds and drew us to him when we were young students. These gave us hints of relationships and friendships we were looking for and a sense of adventure we craved. Apart from books like these, in his talks and conversations he revealed to us a person who was willing to question the conventional wisdom and expose the hypocrisies of society and its so-called stalwarts. In all this he showed a deep compassion for the disadvantaged and his willingness to take their side. Thus, in him one could see a rebel often at odds with the world around him.

He was different from other teachers in the sense he was ever ready to explore the unexplored with the students as a co-seeker. He inspired generations of the young to continuously

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expand their mental horizon, go on asking questions and seeking finding solutions. He would provide a spark, for example, while listening to a group of eager boys and girls and would quietly retreat leaving the ideas to take shape in the course of the lively and often heated discussion that would follow. He could shock and stun unsuspecting members of the audience and take the discourse to another track or level. A quintessential teacher, Chita Bhai goaded his associates into putting their experiences and ideas on paper so that they could be shared with wider circles of readers. There are few like Chita Bhai who would go on encouraging everyone with some gift for self-expression in words to go on writing and silently watch them grow.

Chita Bhai, more than anyone else, popularized in Orissa many an educational innovator from different parts of the world. One could discuss with him ideas of Martin Buber and Spinoza, Gandhi and Tagore, Exupery and Sri Aurobindo.

Unlike other creative writers, Chitta Bhai would not remain content with seeing his name in print, but would constantly reach out to friends and followers in far-flung places and share his thoughts with them. Writing for him was not merely expression of his creative self, but a tool for change and transformation. In this sense, he was no armchair philosopher, but an ardent practitioner of ideas, a true believer in praxis.

The most striking quality of Chitta Bhai's personality was his undying optimism. He firmly believed and asserted again and again that a brighter dawn is in the offing, a dawn that would see millions of the underprivileged realize their potential. He urged everyone to join this adventure and become a part of this transformative project.

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Chitta Bhai: A Man Like Man

5

Banchhanidhi Das

Critic and essayist Chittaranjan Das is known as Chitta Bhai to innumerable souls in Odisha, India and the world. His name, if uttered as Professor Chittaranjan Das, creates confusion among his friends. He had founded Jeevana Vidyalaya at Champattimunda for practicing Gandhian mode of teaching in rural areas. Chitta Bhai also worked with pathways of Sri Aurobindo's integral education in some schools of Odisha. He also taught and worked at Santiniketan and at Rural Institute, Bichpuri, Agra.

Chitta Bhai had actively taken part in the freedom struggle of our country and was arrested during Quit India Movement in 1942. He was a columnist in *Pragativadi*, a leading Odia daily. Through his columns he contributed immensely to journalistic literature and was an opinion maker. Service to others and complete surrender to Absolute Reality were his ideals and we find a few writers of our times who can embody these ideals as Chitta Bhai did. His dedicated life resonates with the dedication of the poets of Satyabadi era of Odia literature. We also see presence of some personality traits (such as love of village, clean politics and cultivating positive social view point) in Chitta Bhai which is similar to that of Gopabandhu, the pioneer of Satyavadi group and the unparalleled humanist maker of modern Odisha.

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Be it in the sphere of education, politics and social commitment both the personalities were similar and at par.

Chitta Bhai's thoughts are based on a deep and abiding conviction that Man is at the root, the title of one of his books in Odia. This conviction of his has its root, among others, in Bengali poet and saint Chandi Das who offers such a view of man in his Bengali version of *Mahabharata*. Here the poet explains that man is the only truth and there is nothing above man: one needs to be a good human being and no more qualification is needed from him.

For Chitta Bhai, selfless service is the only road for one to tread on. For him, the marker of a good man is to appreciate and realize the inner potentiality of a fellow being.[1] In his reflections on human condition, Chitta Bhai goes deeper into the roots of human civilization. In the twilight hours of human civilization, the man started asking himself "who I am." If we look to the start of any epic such as Ramayan and Bhagabata, we see there the discussion, "where from man has come?", "where from this earth has come?" For Chitta Bhai, "This introspection is okay but the findings are full of imaginations and studded with hollow and high sounding idealistic theories. But joyful living became the primary precondition of the first human habitation." From joyfulness the socialization process began as Chitta Bhai points out. Joyful living has naturally generated nearness and established communication process. Then it dawned in an era where a social living has been started. Socialization has brought out man from the shells of sheer individualism and paved way towards a collective life. Thus, says Chitta Bhai, Man started to see his outside and within. He could introspect into his own self and also see the behaviour of others. Thus slowly he learnt how to recognize and go beyond his own limitations and all other outside boundaries. He realized the limits of solely living confined in one's limited boundary where he feels himself lonely and isolated.[2]

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For Chitta Bhai, "Social intimacy and friendship will make the world a home and that would lead to a joyous living." Furthermore, "I am not alone in this world. [..] I have to tolerate pain and enjoy happiness equally and playfully. By cultivating feelings of togetherness, one can be tolerant to excessive pain and enjoy a joyous moment without attachment. This becomes virtually permanent binding force."[3] Furthermore, "On steady growth of fellow feelings and intimacy the world would be felt as a family. Intimacy would heal your feeling of being divided within yourself. It would enable you to cultivate a sense of oneness within you, so that you can feel the whole earth as a village."[4]

Religion also worked like "intimacy" to establish chains of exchange of feelings. Intimacy is created from one's heart but religion very soon got entangled in creating hierarchy in Truth realization. Intimacy worked for ages to establish relation between hearts and the process is still continuing. But religion sometimes worked as a tool to divide people by arousing sectarian passions and boundaries. Today religion has been placed above the human entity and it is projected as a path finder to mankind. But people forget that religion and God are their own creations. While analyzing the genesis of religion and God, Chitta Bhai says: "The Vedas say that at first there was nothingness. There was neither Sat (truth) nor Asat (untruth). No light nor darkness, neither day nor night, only the Absoluteness was present. By interpreting this we can say that there was no religion at all. Thus idols worshipped by each religion are creations of history. When the Truth was tried to be explained or analyzed, the religions began to take shape. When man tried to name any of the facets of Truth, that created a God. That means, every idol or image of God was created as a symbol of Truth."[5]

In ancient times, religion made society pure, clean and disciplined. That was why it was progressive. Later on the rituals

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like Jagyan, penance on body, Tantric Practices, different difficult rituals polluted the stream. Worship, recitation, dhyana or meditation, chanting, sacrifices etc. eroded the broader scope of religion and those also played dominating role. The significance of religion was lost. In middle ages, it became an appendage of the Royal courts and acted like an opium. Religion being a tool of power lost its spark and became an instrument of human oppression. Buddha, Sankar, Chaitanya and other saints of the Bhakti era tried to place religion on its rails, but failed. The social life gradually became critical and problematic. The Industrial Revolution brought in the sense of materialization and religion was categorized as an individual affair. Of course, in a period of crisis at times, some saintly persons came to put dharma on its track again. The Panchasakhas (five saintly poets namely Poet Jagannath Dash, Sishu Ananta, Jasobanta Das, Balaram and Achyuta) fought for dignity of man though they could not set aside monarchy. They declared themselves to be 'Sudras' to make religion a field of service and bring it down to earth. They did not care about caste and community. In the then society where the king and the priests (Brahmins) were united to rule the society at their sweet will, the Panchasakhas declared themselves to be 'Sudras'—servants of society. They propounded that cultivating the sense of 'Sudraness' in oneself is the best way to attain salvation. This virtually broke the stagnation of thought which was prevailing for centuries together. [..] The Panchasakhas brought a powerful upsurge of new thinking in the then Odia society. They became foes to both Rulers and the priests.[6]

For Chitta Bhai, religion and spirituality are not the same. Spirituality is a higher stage of one's journey, relationship and realization. The Creator has not created the universe as a potter building the pot out of clay. He has put Himself into creation. He is the creation and this is his noble manifestation. Virtually

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this thought is the essence of spirituality but not of religion. A spiritual seeker does not obey any particular religion. If a religion wishes to be spiritualized it can cross its boundary and join the stream of spiritual consciousness.[7]

For Chitta Bhai, the journey of spirituality is a journey of intimacy. Being in this journey, one cannot relate to the world as 'Maya' or 'Mithya'. Salvation can be attained here, only here. It cannot be attained by leaving this world and going up.[8]

Indian saints who have enriched the spiritual quest of humanity are Sri Ramkrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Narayan Guru and Gandhiji. Chitta Bhai has vividly discussed the crux of their *sadhana* in his many writings.

Chitta Bhai presents the essence of Sri Aurobindo's thoughts in this way. Man should not fear anybody because the Truth rules in him. He first discovers Truth in himself and then he is able to discover the same in each entity, be it plant, river, mountain or individual. This will create a new consciousness in that man and this will be a polestar to him. The new bondage created in him will give him a sense of happiness, and the society will be enriched and transformed. A great wave of cooperation will be generated. Distances will be shortened. Each believer will come out of his own cave. Everything will be at ease. All will walk with hand in hand in the spirit of cooperation [..] Man, thus, should remake himself with the help of his own knowledge, potentiality to work, love and that will bring real development in him. Then man will be powerful and assertive. This will certainly transform the world and Truth shall dawn.[9]

Chitta Bhai has also given us glimpses of the spiritual vision of Sri Narayan Guru of Kerala. As as he writes about his thoughts: Only the rich and fortunate should not be proud of their right to enter the arena of spirituality. The weak and downtrodden have as much right as them. In fact, they are the first to realize that they are children of the great spirituality. Then they can reshape their

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destiny. They first of all are to turn themselves as appreciator of everything. Through this process they can recreate a new society.[10]

On Gandhi Chitta Bhai shares with us the following, among others: "Gandhi used to invoke his inner voice at the time of his need, as we know. This inner voice has been termed as the voice of conscience, later on by some psychologists. A person living in practicing 'Satya' and 'Ahimsa', often uses to listen to his inner voice. Sometimes he needs its guidance in the hours of crisis." In this context, Chitta Bhai writes: "While learning lessons from the world, one will come across the conscience that remains in one's inner-being. The conscience serves him as a single window and leads him to a balanced life. In balanced life one is able to see truth in every event, becomes calm in face of every aggression, and to keep equilibrium in every aspect of life."[11]

Chitta Bhai walks as a humanist par excellence when he proclaims that "Man is Supreme." He denies any difference among black, white or yellow. He believes that all men are equal and children of this mother earth. As a philosopher he rejects the idea of political, religious and social boundaries. He, at first, loves his own soil but opposes xenophobic and closed nationalism. He is a patriot but not a narrow-minded nationalist. Chitta Bhai has seen in his life time how ultra nationalist ideologies made a monster of Hitler and his followers. While working in Germany he also saw the war-torn racist black spots on the walls and streets.

Chitta Bhai believed and worked in favor of integral education which calls for integration of science and self-knowledge. Practically in integrating handicraft, agriculture, prayer etc. with the traditional education, we get multi-faceted integral education. Chitta Bhai worked tirelessly to put into practice integral education in Odisha's schools. Analyzing the vices of present educational system, Chitta Bhai says: "The conventional education perpetuates hierarchies in the society,

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sacrifices all human values at the altar of material pleasures and widens gap between human beings." [13] He further says:

> It is not enough to measure how much yards of fabrics a boy produces or how many feet of cloth he weaves. This work would generate money at long run, of course. At best we can term it as economic education. It may generate money and may make the student self-reliant in food, clothing and shelter etc., but it does not fulfill the multifaceted needs of life. Thus integral education is necessary to free a child from mental and intellectual contradiction and also free the child from the clutches of fear. Real education could not be realized until and unless the mind is set free from obscurities, fears and the qualities like service and values are being cultivated. Real education could only be realized when man will strive for real knowledge. The real education can take a person from earthly consciousness to divine consciousness.[14]

At the jungle school of Champatimunda, Chitta Bhai practised methods of Gandhian education and worked as Headmaster of that basic school for four years. Chitta Bhai realized there that true education is not confined to boundary of the class room, dull lesson plans nor within text books. If a learner accepts the whole life as a school and he believes the society as his laboratory, and he himself as an apprentice to quest for ultimate reality, there only the education becomes balanced and fulfilled.[15]

For Chitta Bhai, during the learning years, the teacher and the guardian should co-operate with each other. Home is to be seen as an extended part of the school. That will enable a learner to have a comprehensive education.[16] The students should be given scope to show deficiency of the teachers. The teacher should change and amend himself accordingly. Chitta Bhai has

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written out of his jungle school experience: "One day I was going through a diary of a student. Why teachers stay with the students while teaching only – the student raised this question. They should stay with us in our prayer class, meetings, play ground and garden work."[17] Another student wrote: "In this school my learning has begun. Hereafter, this schooling will continue throughout my life.[18]

Chitta Bhai used to go on relief work during flood accompanying his students and go for excursion with them. With their help he repaired the thatched roof of the school, done cultivation work in school land. He tried his utmost to stay with the students outside of the class.

Let the service and dedication of Chitta Bhai be the guiding star in our lives. We can here take a solemn resolve not to ever forget what he had written about the duties of a writer in his epochal essay, *Kabir Khadda Bajarme* [Kabir stands in the Market Place]:

> The writer continues to raise his voice while all become silent. The poet and writers should not lick the feet of the rulers. They should not hanker for favour and stand on their valued ground till last. The poet should call a spade a spade repeatedly without a quiver in his voice. He can make protest without having gone to any protest rally. He should not sell himself at the feet of any flag or voice because he has a sword pen in his hand. He can tell the ruler that he is not a subject under his rule. This sort of caliber would prove his dignity. He can prove himself a sovereign. This is a proof of a real poet of having a spine who does not bend before anyone till his death.

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Walking Hand in Hand Between Albert Camus and Philosopher's Garden : Some Glimpses into a Journey with Chitta Bhai

6

Rabinarayan Dash

Confrontation with Albert Camus

As a young medical student I was fascinated by the novel, *The Stranger*, or in the original French *L'Etranger* by Albert Camus. I read and reread it, came out with no definite conclusion. Its leaves a taste of existentialism blended with various philosophical schools of thoughts like nihilism, determinism as well as absurdism, and it fascinated me. Perhaps I walked alone with the protagonist Meursault in his long quest. I wanted to translate the book to Oriya, my mother language, and I wanted to understand the book more fully.

My close friend Ananta told me about Chittaranjan Das, known as Chitta Bhai, and I began to read his essay "Is war inevitable?" It was my first reading of a critical essay on war and agencies behind wars and descriptions of fear syndrome.

"I wish to translate Albert Camus and travel to Sweden!"He told me to sit. He wanted to listen to me. I was apprehending

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that he would laugh at my mad plans. He neither discouraged me nor did he say that it was a mad idea. We talked rather about translation work, how difficult it is to work with a genuine translation and how important it is to understand the original languages of the authors. He shared with me works of other philosophers such as Spinoza's.

I travelled to Sweden not with the translation but with his spirit. We lost track of each other for some time and slowly I could collect some of his important works and carried them to our small home in Sweden.

A Symposium on Suicide

He was the chief speaker in a small symposium that we organized in the SCB Medical College, Cuttack, on the topic "Suicide". We had invited the police chief of Odisha, a psychologist, a psychiatrist and Chitta Bhai.

The symposium was named after Albert Camus. Retrospectively I don't know why I took the name of the great existentialist philosopher to this small symposium.

Among all the speakers Chitta Bhai's speech was the most illuminating as it was full of humour. The speaker before him told us that there is a homeopathic cure to suicide. He was a police man and a practicing homeopath. I remember Chitta Bhai's arguments swinging between the rich Scandinavian nations and the poorest of India as a mirror to understand the complexity of human behavior. His satire and humor made us laugh on this serious subject.

After this occasion I followed Chitta Bhai to a few institutional functions in which he took part as the chief speaker. Travelling with him from Cuttack to different places in Odisha was charming and memorable. He often came with his profound arguments and lucidity of language closely knitted with humour. It is unfortunate that all most none of his speeches were ever recorded for posterity to understand his great mind.

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From One Doctor to Another: Dr.Alexis Carrel and Dr. Albert Schweitzer

I had given my manuscript to him to look at it and give comments. I was the editor of the SCB Medical college annual journal. The name of the essay was "Modern Medicine with a pinch of salt!"

He returned the manuscript with his comments. I was surprised. It opened for me a new dimension to understand Europe during the Nazi-era and their experiment on Eugenics. I argued with him and he listened to me patiently. In his famous book, *Man, the Unknown* (1935), Alexis Carrel, the Nobel prize awarding doctor contained his own social prescriptions, advocating, in part, that mankind could better itself by following the guidance of an elite group of intellectuals, and by implementing a regime of enforced eugenics. Carrel claimed the existence of a "hereditary biological aristocracy" and argued that "deviant" human types should be suppressed using techniques. "Only a Hitler can carry out Dr. Carrel's visions!" was Chitta Bhai's last comment. The essay appeared in the journal with his comment and he asked me to read about Dr Albert Schweitzer. He often quoted to me from Scweitzer's famous work, such as *Reverence for Life* ("*Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*"). We talked about Dr Schweitzer's period in his famous hospital in Lambaréné on the Ogooué River, in what is now the Gabon. Understanding Dr. Schweitzer led me to understand the miracle of Ahimsa, non-violence, and messages of the ancient religion of Jainism.

Educare as a Dream and a Vision

I came twice with my wife and we spent a few hours with Chitta Bhai. He heard about the educational movement we have just started. We had just begun working with our organization Educare to develop school libraries and to work with schools children in a bit unconventional way. Educare is conducting workshops with school children and everybody who shares the

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workshops receives a certificate. There is no place for competitions and prizes in our workshops. We have worked towards an inclusive spirit. Chitta Bhai with his long experience and knowledge in education introduced us to another innovative education system, "The integral schools." Educare works with many integral schools in close collaboration and one sees and feels a difference when one visits and stays in those schools. His seminal work like *Jangala Chitti* (Letters from the Forest) and biography of Kristen Kold, the pioneer of Danish folk high schools, is an inspiration for us who work at the grass roots level of education.

Last meeting

I heard he was sick and I had come to India for a few days. Bhagyadhar Bhai, a close friend to both Chittabhai and his family, told me over phone "Chittabhai is now at Kalinga hospital with a hip fracture!" I came to Kalinga hospital and asked Bhagadhar bhai if it was possible for me to meet him for a short while. He was in the IUC with severe breathing problems and an infection. I was with my artist friend Kesudas and we waited in the tea stall outside. After a while Bhagadagar Bhai came back and said, "You can come and see him just from the door!" We followed him to the sick room. He recognized me from his bed and smiled. His wife Usha Apa asked me to come in. The room was crowded. As a physician I could feel that he was very sick and that it might be our last meeting. I wished to hold his hands to say him goodbye. I heard him asking, "How is Ingrid and Ipsa?" He remembered my wife and our daughter's name. His next words were, "Hilsen!". In Danish, "Greeting to them!". "Any new book has come out?" I knew he was asking about my new poetry work that had been published a year ago. Tears rolled from my eyes and I said," Last year Chitta Bhai!" I stood their motionless holding his hands. He was trying to sleep and to be awake in between. Almost an hour went by. The clinical round would soon

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start and I said to him, "Chitta Bhai, I am coming!" He smiled back and said in Danish." På gensyn!"(see you soon!).

A Philosopher's Garden

It was a November noon at Bhubaneswar, I came to his house. Bhagyadhar Bhai had his book store in the house. I came to visit and to talk to him about my poetry book and wished to see Chitta Bhai's wife Usha Apa. She had returned from her journey to America and asked me to come and sit in the portico. Usha Apa who was once my teacher in the medical college told me how Chitta Bhai used to sit in the portico for hours and look at the trees. She told stories about how different flower plants had been collected by Chitta Bhai and planted in the garden. While leaving the house I could spend sometime in the garden alone. This was not any exceptional garden. It looked quite ordinary with mango trees and many bushes. Still I thought "Oh, he is not here, but all the trees he has planted are growing and smiling!"Days later back in Sweden, I felt an urge to write a poem, "Philosopher's Garden", and it has grown into a poetry collection.

If letters are hanging as buds
Sentences as flowers
Paragraphs as fruits
And the tree as a book.
Are you there?
Hiding among others?
(From the Oriya poetry collection " Darshanikara Bagicha")

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Chitta Ranjan Das: My Inspiration

7

Ananta Putel

Chitta Bhai's contribution to my life is immense and indescribable as well as to the Integral Education Movement of Odisha. He is the one who inspires me to be active part in integral education and lead a community life to realize Human Unity. He is the one who unlocks many doors for me to access world literature and philosophy. His Gadhian lifestyle, sensible Tagorean actions and Aurobindian vision of life make me think that an uncompromised, unconditional and simple life of love is definitely possible if we sincerely want it. Above all, he makes me dream unconventionally for a new life and a new world.

His two awe-inspiring books *Jeevana Vidyalaya* (The School of Life) and *Jangala Chithi* (Letters from the Forest) inspire me to be in the profession of teaching and learning. These books give us spell-binding description of his experiment and research on education that he carried out in an experimental school inside a remote village in a dense forest. These two masterpieces inculcated love and passion for children in me in more concrete form.

The time I have spent with him in a study camp was the most inspiring and joyful moment of my life. Those five days in

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the study camp in June 1995 at Sahajbahal, a small village, was the turning point of my life. I started thinking differently and out of the box. He actually sowed a seed in me that flowered to Vishwaneedam and Gaiatree school which we have now in rural western Orissa.

Through his books, he questions my ossified conventional and orthodox ideas, beliefs and established conditional thinking with his impenetrable and unbeatable logic. He has shattered my mental blocks and barriers by his influential and powerful arguments, skillful presentation of his profound intellect and humorous language.

His autobiographical writings instill a feeling and concern for our fellow-beings. Despite his critical and judgmental views on the problems of contemporary society, he has a robust optimism and an unshakeable faith in human beings and its nature. He inspires me to think critically and to be creative and innovative in life if I like to lead a true human life.

His influence in my life is so much that sometime I think what I would have been if I would not have met him. May be an ordinary man who is just hooked to monotonous and most boring city life and running behind money and career.

I always feel that I am lucky enough to know him, and spend time with him. I feel proud to be an Oriya because, with Oriya as my mother language, I can read his books. Otherwise I feel I would have been deprived of his writings.

He is no more in his physical body but I always feel he is close to me like my breath and heart beats. I never felt he is no more with us. He is always with me and guiding me for another type of life.

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The Virtue of an Epistemic Agent: A *Sradhanjalee* to Chitta Bhai

8

Ranjan Kumar Panda

In the Socratic schema of the analysis of *education* we find a significant description of learning that not only refers to the notion of *upbringing* but also emphasizes the dialogical nature of human inquiry. As learning delves into the learners' engagement with the self, culture and the society, these two notions are significantly associated with the life of a learner. Chitta Ranjan Das, *Chitta Bhai* as we affectionately call him, has had a continuous dialogical engagement with society- with all of us. In his reflection, human life in a globalized economic society is no doubt becoming knowledge centric. Living in the horizon of this centrality has made the life mechanical and illusive. His calling is indeed in the path of Socrates, who ignited the power of rational questioning once upon a time among the youth of Athens. Chitta Bhai continues to draw our attention to this fact that we need to reflect upon and reflect enough on the very notion of instituting a knowledge society *from a normative point of view.*

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As knowledge institutions are seen mostly as the productive factors responsible for the growth and sustenance of knowledge, their activities ought to be grounded on normativity of life. That is to say, knowledge institutions can sustain only in the climate of morality and creativity. These climatic conditions of learning are interrelated and complementary to each other for the growth of knowledge. In the creative climatic condition, the learner is essentially treated as a free being to nurture ideas and engage in the inquiry of truth seeking. This concern for knowledge production as a creative enterprise is based on the presupposition of the ethical as well as the aesthetic spirit of the being. The ethical emphasizes that the *telos* of education must inculcate the *freedom* of truth seeking, whereas the aesthetic emphasizes the harmony of cultivating knowledge for both the material and spiritual growth of humanity.

As Chitta Bhai's *upbringing* happened in such educational climatic conditions as Viswabharati, Gurudev Rabindranath's Santiniketan, one finds a strong sense of virtuous longing in his reflections on the perspective of instituting knowledge society. As an inspired learner, Chitta Bhai represents to us what would be the virtue of an epistemic agent. That is, the person who is aspiring to learn and keep him / her engaged in the art of learning must have these virtues. They are—*sraddha* (love or reverence), *samandha* (relationship), *netrutva* (leadership) and *tapasya* (strivings). Knowledge society as a social institution is not only ontologically grounded on *collective intentionality* but also functions as a normative symbol to suggest the learner to be engaged in a transformative dialogical inquiry. Such an inquiry need not essentially treat knowledge from an economic point of view. Rather, the commercialization of knowledge shows how knowledge creation is mechanically connected with our life. The mechanistic relationship and its success have been productive, in the sense that it has been driving society towards the path of

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pleasure centric form of life. What is being neglected is the *work-centric* form of life. The *pleasure centric* culture in which knowledge is produced signifies the narrow conception of human happiness. The whole aim centers around the notion of material success and physical security. On the other hand, in the *work-centric* culture the learner seeks knowledge not to acquire power for himself / herself, rather tries to confront the societal problems in the language of *sraddha and sadhana*, which is the fusion of the language of the ethical and the aesthetic. In this regard, the aspiration of the epistemic agent is to live a virtuous life. Referring to the metaphor of *Socrates*, Chitta Bhai draws our attention to the Socratic attitude of knowledge seeking. This attitude involves 'critical reflexivity and moral commitment' for the cultivation of knowledge. The epistemic agent must discover new challenges and aspire for truth by exercising the contemplative intentionality (*tapasya*), rather than merely craving for the active fulfillment of material gains. The contemplative intentionality guided by the language of *sraddha*, *sadhana* and *tapasya* would generate the sense of leadership (*netrutwa*) in the epistemic agent. These agents one day 'would discover their own nobility.'

Let us cultivate these virtues of learning and try to engage ourselves with the Socratic quest of Chitta Bhai to sense his immortal presence.

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Move on, move on 9

Ase Moller Hansen

As a reader from Europe, I have been lucky to catch a few glimpses of the writings of Chitta Ranjan Das. His uplifting words strengthen the hope that we through self-transformation and determinate efforts will be able to take the existent reality to a higher evolutionary level.

In a society where we are half blinded with entertainment and exaggerated materialism, it is very nurturing to read his guiding words:

> The genuinely committed writer is never on the side of the establishment. His voice is always a powerful protest against arbitrary power. He is always on the side of man, of the future and of truth in spite of the pretensions that seem to rule around. A writer is always on the side affirmation, on the side of love.
>
> I am among those who strongly believe that we have a lot to learn from Indian visionaries like The Buddha, Gandhi, Tagore and also contemporary writers such as Chitta Ranjan Das in our struggle for a less materialistic and more inclusive and dignified global society.

2011 is the UNESCO-designated year of Rabindranath Tagore. It is my deep hope that this will be a year when broader parts of society will open the eyes for the great heritage of Indian spiritual philosophy.

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Part Two

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10

Literature, Philosophy and Social Transformations: Towards a New Art of Cross-Fertilization

Ananta Kumar Giri

We seek certainly for that sort of expression which is self-expression. When an individual feels himself hedged in he recognizes the necessity of getting a situation in which there shall be an opportunity for him to make his addition to the understanding, and not simply to the conventionalized 'me.'

— G.H. Mead (1934), *Mind, Self and Society*, p. 212.

He who takes his stand in relation shares in a reality, that is, in a being that neither merely belongs to him nor merely lies outside him. All reality is an activity in which I share without being able to appropriate for myself. Where there is no sharing there is no reality. Where there is self-appropriation there is no reality.

— Martin Buber (1958), *I and Thou*, p. 63.

Who is my audience? It took me a long time to understand that the "public" I am waiting for is the same that I am living for: humanity at large.

—Raimon Panikkar (1995), *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom*, p. 85.

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What would the world be if there were no needle and thread? Naturally, no stitched garments!

—Kapila Vatsayan (2010), *Sui Dargha: Crossing Boundaries*, p. ix.

It is not the elements or the sets which define the multiplicity. What defines it is the AND, as something which has its place between the elements or between the sets. AND, AND, AND—stammering.

—Gilles Deleuze & Claire Parnet (2002), *Dialogues*.

Literature and Society

Exploring and realizing creative relationship between literature and society is an adventure in co-realizations and transformations going beyond the logic of the fields of both literature and society. It also calls for understanding their manifold conceptualizations and realizations. Our conventional understanding of literature is that it is created by men of literature. It is not always realized that literature is part of life and society; when it is done so it is usually conceptualized and represented in a language of mirror and adaptation: literature is either a mirror of society or it adapts to the logic of society. But literature is not only a mirror of society but also a field of creative expressions and confrontations which breaks existing mirrors of society and creates new languages of self and social realizations and new landscapes of imaginations. Both literature and society are not only fields of adaptation but also fields of transcendence and transformations in which individuals and groups strive to go beyond adaptation and create new conditions of self, co- and social realizations. These are fields in which there is interrogation and confrontation of the existing logic of literature and society. Literature is thus not only a field of murmuring but also grumbling. It is a field of contestation and confrontations of the existing grammar of society based upon a higher grumbling of self and awakened social groups and movements.[7] Chitta Ranjan embodied such a transformative relationship between literature and society.

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In exploring relationship between literature and society, the language of interdisciplinary transaction, as it happens in conventional academic corridors, is not adequate. We need a new language and practice of transdisciplinary cultivation, beyond adaptation and meditative verbs of transformations. In this striving for a new language and relationship, realizing the distinction between noun and verb is crucial. In our conventional languages, literature, society as well as such important terms of personal, cultural and national identity as person, nation, writer, India, Shakespeare etc. come to us as nouns which we also uncritically use, adopt and adapt to. These nouns already from the beginning are imprisoned in a logic of possessive pronouns—this is my self, this is our literature—and any foundational critique of such possessive pronouns are met with resistance and sometimes violent annihilation. But literature, society as well as such fundamental fields of life as self are not only nouns but also verbs. They embody verbs of unfoldment, emergence and realizations.[ii] But as verbs they are not only activistic (which is the way verbs are constructed and realized in modernity) but also meditative (Giri 2009). But these meditative verbs of action, expression, communication and co-realizations are manifold-sitting, walking as well as dancing verbs of life. Literature and society are verbs of co-realizations and meditative transformations involving walking, sitting and dancing verbs (Giri 2011b). Public sphere is an important sphere in which such verbs of co-realizations and transformations are at work.

And in such transformative co-realizations the nature of "and" plays an important role. If we conceptualize "and" in a logic of juxtaposition, as it mostly happens in the logic of interdisciplinarity, the terms and fields on both sides of "and" do not get mutually interpenetrated and transformed. "And" becomes a helpless presence repeating the logic of "end" (which simultaneously means end of the meaning as well as ultimate end or purpose). But if our conception and realization of "and" is one of mutual interrogation, transmutation and mothering

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bridge then our inhabitation, meditation, dance, walk and work in the space of the "and," the space of the middle, becomes a work of transformation—transforming a one-sided conceptualization, realization and organization of fields such as literature and society. While our conventional understanding and work in the space of "and" reproduces a logic of "end" and "noun," in beyond adaptation and meditative, interrogating and mothering verbs, "and" is a space of transformations. "And" is a space of quest for infinity from the actors and fields on its two sides rather than a reiteration of the totalizing logic of totality of either of them.[9] "And" is a mothering ground and bridge of quest for and embodiment of responsibility. In his work, *Sahitya O* [Literature and..], Chitta Ranjan suggests such a transformative, interrogative and mothering meaning and realization of "and" (see Das 1989a, Giri 2011b). This also comes out in a joint work of co-creation in which the poetic critic and essayist Chitta Ranjan and poet Srinivas Udgata co-create poems and reflections on poetry together in the work *Ebam* which also means "and" (Das 2009b).[iv]

Public sphere helps us in realizing such a meaning of "and" beyond the adaptive, already determined and ultimate logic of "end." Literature helps us to express ourselves to ourselves as well as to others and the public. Expression in the field of literature is simultaneously self, mutual and public and helps in the creation of public spheres in societies. In the creation of modern public spheres, as Jurgen Habermas (1989) himself tells us, literature has played an important role. He calls it literary public sphere. But it is one thing to talk about literary public sphere as a type of public sphere or even as a segment of public sphere and it is another thing to realize the integral literary dimension of public sphere itself. In later conceptualizations and realizations, literature becomes an integral part of public sphere through work of rhetoric, language, style of argumentation and mutual co-presence in such modes as co-walking and co-labouring.[x] In his vision and practice, Chitta

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Ranjan embodied this later realization of public sphere. Chitta Ranjan was a tireless participant in public discourses and public spaces through speech, writing and regular columns in newspapers. Chitta Ranjan sought to recreate public sphere through creative and critical literary interventions.

Unfortunately our understanding of public sphere in social sciences do not fully appreciate its literary dimension and constitution. It has a very prosaic and intellectualist rendering of public sphere without realizing public drama and public poetry in it. The other limitation of contemporary social science understanding of public sphere is that it is part of an uncritical telos of modernity; originating in modernity, it can only become part of an "unfinished agenda of modernity." Such conceptualizations of public sphere do not help us realize the work of public sphere in pre-modern and non-modern societies (cf. Giri 2002; Giri 2008; Uberoi 1996). But literature in all societies have created public spaces and public spheres for mutual communication though depending upon the nature of social arrangement and mode of government the nature of such social manifestation of creativity has varied. In societies where creators of literature seeking critical public dialogue with their literature of protest and alternative imagination are not tolerated, humiliated and killed, meditative verbs and streams also dry up and die. Such conditions existed in the past in many societies, especially those under authoritarian regimes, and it does continue to exist even in liberal modern democracies.

Literature and Society:

Beyond Adaptation and Dynamics of Creative Expressions

In order to understand the relationship between society and literature, we need to understand the transformed understanding of both these fields. Society is a field which helps individuals to come together and express themselves. In sociological theorization of society, there is an acknowledgement of the fact that society is not just a field of *a priori* determination and

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embeddedness but also a field of self-realization, co-realizations and creative emergence (cf. Sunder Rajan 1998). G.H. Mead, one of the pioneers of modern sociological thinking and author of *Mind, Self and Society*, helps us realize the limits of the social and urges us to realize that neither I nor me is a reiteration of the existing conventions of society. As Mead tells us:

> [..] me may be regarded as giving the form of the "I." The novelty comes in the action of the "I," but the structure, the form of the self is one which is conventional.
>
> *This conventional form may be reduced to a minimum.* In the artist's attitude, where there is artistic creation, the emphasis on the element of novelty is carried to the limit. This demand for the unconventional is especially noticeable in modern art. Here the artist is supposed to break away from convention; a part of his artistic expression is thought to be in the breakdown of convention (1934: 209).[vi]

Among contemporary philosophers and sociologists we also get an intimation of a post-conventional and post-social conceptualization of society. Jurgen Habermas (1990) tells us that morality is not just reproducing the conventional logic of society rather it is to learn how to think and act in post-conventional ways taking into consideration the calling of universal and universalizable justice. Alain Touraine (2007) tells us about sociology beyond society which explores the way individuals become subjects. For Touraine, becoming a member of society is integrally linked to the process in which one becomes a subject but to be a subject is to have the ability to say "no" to the existing logic if this does not allow creative self-realization. But what Touraine and Habermas have not explored sufficiently is how by cultivating the literary field on the part of self and society one can realize the post-conventional dimension of society, have the capacity to say "no" in the face of an

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overwhelming compulsion for "yes," and go beyond the logic of an *a priori* social. What they have not explored is how practice of creative literature can contribute to co-creating society as a field of creative expression, co-realizations and confrontations. This we find in the works of seekers and experimenters such as Chitta Ranjan.

From the field of literature, we also have a connected move to realize society as a field of self-expression and co-realizations. Chitta Ranjan, for instance, urges us to realize that society has been built by those who do not confirm. Personality and self for him is not just a logic of adaptation and socialization; it is a field to realize an emergent wholeness building upon one's quest for self-realization, co-realization and world realization (Das 2010). Touraine's appeal for sociology beyond society finds a creative resonance in Chitta Ranjan who urges us to realize how boundaries of sociology are now being transcended in creative experiments and adventures.

The Calling of Creative Public Spheres

We usually look at literary creativity in an individualized way but now we need to link both to fields of creative public spaces and spheres. For our *tapasya* of creativity in literature and society, we need the spheres of the creative self, intimate groups of mutuality as well as public spheres. But in each of these spheres, we continue the modernist logic of linearity. Despite the language of sphere in public sphere our conceptualization and organization of it is linear. It is hardly a sphere where the spherical nature of our being is at work or finds an expression.[viii] In this context, we need to conceptualize and realize public spheres as manifold circles and *chakras*. Public spheres as *chakras* reminding us of such historic exemplars such as Buddhist *dharmachakras* bring interested people together where people through creative sharing as well as contestations generate mutual energy. Literature can help realize public spheres as *chakras* where individuals and groups can express themselves—

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both their vertical aspiration for higher seeking as well as horizontal longing and commitment for solidarity—and through this generate energy. Public spheres as *chakras* thus become an inviting and mothering space for intertwining the vertical and horizontal dimension of our quest, and seeking to integrate these in creative ways.

But this challenges us to go beyond the dualism of the vertical and horizontal. The concept and organization of public sphere in modernity is bound to a logic of double contingency and dualism. For example, we look at self, other and society through the logic of what Strydom (2009) calls "double contingency" of self and the other. This double contingency is also imprisoned within dualism. But now we need to bring the concept of "triple contingency" to each of these spheres. In triple contingency, along with self and other, there is also a public (Strydom 2009). But this public is not fixed, it is emergent, it is not only observing but also participating. Triple contingency does not lie only outside but also works inside. Triple contingency is also a bearer of transcendence as it transcends the dualistic logic of double contingency of self and the other.

In literature, spiritual traditions and creative imaginations we are familiar with the concept and reality of third eye. This third eye exists not only in Shiva, the meditative *tapaswee* and dancer, but also in all of us. Triple contingency can be linked to the work of third eye. Literature and creative public spheres can help us realize and cultivate not only the triple contingency of life thus going beyond the arrogance and exclusionary assertion of either self or other but also develop and realize our third eyes, a challenge missing in contemporary theorization of society and public sphere. Public sphere and creative meditation can help us realize both triple contingency and third eye and then move it further to the fourth, fifth and further dimensions of our contingencies, aspirations and struggles.[vi]

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Life Worlds and Living Words

But for this we would have to recreate the link between what is called life worlds and system worlds through the categories of lived worlds and living words. Our lived worlds every where are multiplex and plural but the language of life worlds and system worlds as it comes in sociology and in the works of critical theorists such as Habermas usually present a one-dimensional logic and rationality such as the primacy of rational in modernity and hierarchy in traditional societies. Life worlds every where are also subjected to dominant logic of the system world such as market, state, caste and gender. In this context, to cultivate lived worlds with their creativity, courage, transcendence and multidimensionality is a challenge which calls for us to go beyond the existing logic of life worlds and system worlds. The challenge of creativity is simultaneous: simultaneously nurturing lived worlds of vibrancy, energy, soulful togetherness and meditative solitude and living words which move us not to hatred and annihilation but to mutual blossoming and co-realizations. Both lived worlds and living words do *tapasya* for and with beauty, dignity and dialogues in the face of and in the midst of ugliness, indignity and violence.

Living words work as new *mantras* of life, to put in the words of Sri Aurobindo and embody what Martin Heidegger (1994) calls "way making movement." They just do not mirror "forms of life" but create new ways of life. They just do not reproduce existing language but create new languages of self and social realizations.[ix] They just do not reproduce the rationality of either tradition or modernity but possibly embody strivings towards what Latin American thinker Enrique Dussel (2010) calls "transmodernity."[x] They are not just part of either the logic of transcendental awe in tradition or "linguistification of the sacred" in modernity (see Das 2004).[xi] While they seek to make the Divine and Nature part of the communicative field of humans and express it in ways understandable to modern rational mind, it nonetheless does not reduce either of them only to what is comprehensible in the language of modern rationality. It seeks

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to cultivate the ineffable and ever-present and dynamically moving Beyond in both lived worlds and living words while at the same time making them part of our everyday conversations. Both lived worlds and living words become sites of courage, creativity and transcendence working in between and in the margins of fear, drudgery and pull towards an imprisonment in closed walls which is often justified in the name of immanence. In his strivings Chitta Ranjan embodied such a creative cultivation of both lived worlds and living words.

Going beyond the "linguistification of sacred" (cf. Habermas 1990) in modernity and the consequent disenchantment and dualism between the religious and secular both life worlds and living words embody new border crossing between rational and emotional, religion and reason, nature and human, mental and supramental. The life worlds and living words embody such a new border crossing among human, nature and divine in continuously emergent ways.

Philosophy and Literature

Chitta Ranjan had a life-long passion for both philosophy and literature. His literary works embodied deep philosophical quest as he expressed important philosophical ideas of great savants of humanity such as Spinoza and Sri Aurobindo in simple and creative ways. This way Chitta Ranjan follows a great heritage of creative seeking which has sought to embody crossing of borders between philosophy and literature. Chitta Ranjan wrote his undergraduate theses on Spinoza and in this he tells us how Spinoza's philosophy influenced both scientists such as Einstein and poets such as Goethe and Schiller.

Philosophy, Literature and Challenges of Human Development and Social Transformations

Philosophy and literature as they help us to be reflective and creative beyond the canons of adaptation of the existing logic of society play a significant role in human development and social transformations. But this is rarely realized in discourses

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and practices of human development and social transformations. Nowadays so much is talked about human development but its proponents such as Amartya Sen (1999) do not link development as functioning and capabilities to vision, practice and cultivation of creativity. Though there is suggestion towards this in Sen's collaborator Martha Nussbaum, yet one does not find a reference to creativity in Nussbaum's ten-point agenda of global capability (cf. Nussbaum 2006). Our reflection on philosophy, literature and social transformations challenges us to bring cultivation of philosophical reflection as well as literary creativity to the center of vision, policy, politics and practice of human development.

Social transformation also needs to involve transformation of our existing philosophical and literary frames. For Chitta Ranjan, social transformation means transformation of our base—the base of our institutions and consciousness—and in this transformative philosophy and literature plays an important role. Proponents of human development such as Amartya Sen draw inspiration mainly from philosophers such as Aristotle and Kant. But we need to understand the limits of such philosophical reflections, for example lack of cultivation of transcendence in Aristotelian *phronesis* and cultivation of shared suffering for upliftment of humanity in Kant, and have a much widened and deepened basis for our creative efforts in human development and social transformations. Here we can, again, draw inspiration from Chitta Ranjan with his participation in the global heritage of philosophy and literature as planetary seeking and conversations.

Towards a New Art of Cross-Fertilization

Literature, society and public spheres are fields of living words and lived worlds. Living worlds and lived words can make us pregnant, pregnant with a new creativity. While our existing space and time are empty and continuously being emptied out with the logic of the system such as money, market and capital, life worlds and lived worlds help us cultivate pregnant spaces

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and pregnant times. Both lived worlds and living words work as seeds for a new pregnancy thus helping us realize the concept of immaculate conception in new ways. Our living words can impregnate us as our lived worlds of *tapasya* can make us fertile which is an embodiment of a new spiritual eroticism.[18] Our compassion and confrontation can make us conceive new ideas and relationships.

Our fields of literature, society and public sphere have become dry and deserted and we need to make these fertile. But for this available fertilizers from the market and external world are not adequate. We need to make them fertile through self, mutual and cross-fertilization in which our quality of life, relationships and living words play a crucial role.

It is earthworms which make the land fertile but today we need to be earthworms to each other as well as to ourselves. But once the land is fertile we would have to cultivate the land as a garden for which we need to be gardeners. But both earthworms and gardeners can remain bound only to the field thus uncritically reproducing the logic of embeddeness which also becomes hostile, opposed and violent not only to forces of emergence from the field itself but also to other fields. In this context the calling of cross-fertilization and cross-pollination calls us to grow wings and be simultaneously birds and bards, fly and sing together, wonder and wander.[xiii] Literature, society and creative public spheres can help us simultaneously become earthworms, gardeners and birds.[xiv] It can also help us become Socratic gadflies, as Socrates, Antigone, Gandhi, Chitta Ranjan and many other seekers and fighters of humanity have exemplified, striking the powers that be which hinders our potential, aspiration and efforts for self-realization, mutual blossoming and world transformations.

Endnotes:

[1] In our seminar at Shillong on "Literature and society : Interdisciplinary Transactions" on March 2011 in which some of these ideas were first presented in his key note address,

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Professor Mrinal Miri said that literature is an act of murmuring. In my presentation I said that literature is also an act of grumbling, especially higher grumbling of self and awakened social groups. In offering this argument I am building upon the work of Chitta Ranjan (2010) who talks about the work of higher grumbling in personality and society based upon the work of Abraham Maslow.

[2] We may note here that in different philosophical, cultural and spiritual traditions, body, mind and Being are considered verbs. As Tu Wei-ming writes about body in Chinese culture and philosophy: "There's a beautiful term, *ti*, which means the body. But, that word, *ti*, can also be used as a verb. It means just my body, but also to embody. The embodiment is a process of understanding other human beings experientially as well as intellectually and spiritually" (Weiming 2000: 50). In his *Art and Experience*, John Dewey also writes about mind: "Mind is primarily a verb" (quoted in Elbridge 2000: 244-245). And theologian and philosopher Raimon Panikkar writes about Being: "Being is a verb, an action, and it has rhythm" (Panikkar 1995: 26).

[3] This resonates with the thoughts of Emmanuel Levinas. Franson Manjali (2001) also explores such pathways in his *Literature and Infinity*.

[4] So does poet and novelist Rabi Narayan Dash (2008) in his book of poems, *Ebam Kadha* (and buds).

[5] While Habermasian public sphere is mainly one of sphere of argumentation I make it plural by bringing such activities as love and labor in to it. Cf. Giri 2008.

[6] As Mead (1934: 221; emphasis added) tells us:

> The value of an ordered society is essential to our existence but there also has to be room for an expression of the individual himself if there has to be a satisfactorily developed society. A means for such an expression must be provided. *Until we have a social structure in which the individual can express himself as the*

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artist and the scientist does, we are thrown back on the sort of the structure found in the mob, in which everybody is free to express against some hated object of the group.

[7] Philosopher Peter Sloterdijk urges us to realize the distinction between a spherical approach and a linear approach.

[8] This calls for cross-cultural and border-crossing dialogue between critical theory and religious and spiritual ways of thinking. It would be interesting to explore further dialogue between the concept of triple contingency in critical theory and trinity in Christian religious and spiritual tradition. For Raimundo Panikkar, an inspiring spiritual seeker and thinker, "Trinity is not a number but the depth and unfolding of the riches of reality, which is a living relationship" (Pikaza 2010: 119). "Panikkar thereby seeks to move beyond a form of dualism, following the best *advaita* experience (of non-dualism), opening a way to dialogue [..]" (ibid). In the same way we can realize triple contingency not as a number but as the depth and creativity of relationship beyond the dualistic logic of self and other. But triple contingency also urges us to realize that Trinity whether it is in Christian tradition or Hindu tradition is also confronted with the challenges of public—an observant and meditative public.

[9] As expressed in the following poem:

Oh friend
You said
We need a new language
A new *sadhana* of words and *tapasya* of worlds
This is not a language of victory
Nor is one of self-advertisement and aggrandizement
Neither is it a language of doomsday
This is a language of walking our ways together
Walking our dreams, *sadhana* and struggle

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II

In our co-habitations of affection
Of compassion and confrontation
Words become *mantras*
Of a new life, a new responsibility
Of wiping tears from our eyes and
Again taking each other into our laps
Renewing our strength from embrace
We create new paths by walking
We create new language
Our language is the language of walking
Stars of *mantras* leap from our lap
(a poem originally written by the author in Oriya and then translated)

[10] The following quotation from Dussel (2010) helps us to understand transmodernity:

> Europe began to function as the "center" of the world market (and therefore to extend the "world system" throughout the world) with the advent of the industrial revolution; on the cultural plane, this produced the phenomenon of the Enlightenment, the origins of which, in the long run, we should look for (according to the hypothesis of Morrocan philosopher Al-Yabri, who we will discuss later) in the Averröist philosophy of the caliphate of Córdoba. Europe's crucial and enlightened hegemony scarcely lasted two centuries (1789-1989).[11] Only two centuries! Too short-term to profoundly transform the "ethico-mythical nucleus" (to use Ricoeur's expression) of ancient and universal cultures like the Chinese and others of the Far East (like the Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.), the Hindustanic, the Islamic, the Russian-Byzantine, and even the Bantu or the Latin American (though with a

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different structural composition). These cultures have been partly *colonized* (included through negation in the totality, as aspect A of Diagram 1), but most of the structure of their values has been excluded—*scorned, negated and ignored*—rather than annihilated. The economic and political system has been dominated in order to exert colonial power and to accumulate massive riches, but those cultures were deemed to be unworthy, insignificant, unimportant, and useless. The tendency to disparage those cultures, however, has allowed them to survive in silence, in the shadows, simultaneously scorned by their own modernized and westernized elites. That negated "exterior," that alterity—always extant and latent—indicates the existence of an unsuspected cultural richness, which is slowly revived like the flames of the fire of those fathoms buried under the sea of ashes from hundreds of years of colonialism. That cultural exteriority is not merely a substantive, uncontaminated, and eternal "identity." It has been evolving in the face of Modernity itself; what is at stake is "identity" in the sense of process and growth, but always as an exteriority. These cultures, asymmetrical in terms of their economic, political, scientific, technological, and military conditions, therefore maintain an alterity with respect to European Modernity, with which they have coexisted and have learned to respond in their own way to its challenges. They are not dead but alive, and presently in the midst of a process of rebirth, searching for new paths for future development (and inevitably at times taking the wrong paths). Since they are not modern, these cultures cannot be "post"-modern either. They are simultaneously pre-modern (older than modernity), contemporary to Modernity, and soon, to

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> Transmodernity as well. Postmodernism is a final stage in modern European/North American culture, the "core" of Modernity. Chinese or Vedic cultures could never be European post-modern, but rather are something very different as a result of their distinct roots.

Thus, the strict concept of the "*trans*-modern" attempts to indicate the radical novelty of the irruption – as if from nothing – from the transformative exteriority of that which is always Distinct, those cultures in the process of development which assume the challenges of Modernity, and even European/North American Post-modernity, but which respond *from another place, another location.* They respond from the perspective of their own cultural experiences, which are distinct from those of Europeans/ North Americans, and therefore have the capacity to respond with solutions which would be absolutely impossible for an exclusively modern culture. A future *trans*-modern culture – which assumes the positive moments of Modernity (as evaluated through criteria distinct from the perspective of the other ancient cultures) – will have a rich pluriversality and would be the fruit of an authentic intercultural dialogue, that would need to bear clearly in mind existing asymmetries (to be an "imperial-core" or part of the semi-peripheral "central chorus"—like Europe today, and even more so since the 2003 Iraq War—is not the same as to be part of the postcolonial and peripheral world). But a post-colonial and peripheral world like that of India, in a position of abysmal asymmetry with respect to the metropolitan core of the colonial era, does not for this reason cease to be a creative nucleus of ancient cultural renewal which is decisively distinct from all of the others, with the capacity to propose novel and necessary answers for the anguishing challenges that the Planet throws upon us at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

"*Trans*-modernity" points toward all of those aspects that are situated "beyond" (and also "prior to") the structures valorized

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by modern European/North American culture, and which are present in the great non-European universal cultures and have begun to move toward a pluriversal project.

[11] Habermas (1990) talks about "linguistification of the sacred" where sacred becomes part of ordinary language and conversation. But in this there may be a danger of reduction of sacred to language that Habermas does not explore.

[12] Note here what philosopher Luc Irigaray (2002: 115-117) writes:

> Carnal sharing becomes then a spiritual path, a poetic and also a mystical path [..] Love takes place in the opening to self that is the place of welcoming the transcendence of the other. [..] The path of such an accomplishment of the flesh does not correspond to a solipsistic dream [..] nor to a fin-de-siecle utopia, but to a new stage to be realized by humanity. [..] Nature is then no longer subdued but it is adapted, in its rhythms and necessities, to the path of its becoming, of its growth. Caressing loses the sense of capturing, bewitching, appropriating [..] The caress becomes a means of growing together toward a human maturity that is not confused with an intellectual competence, with the possession of property [..] nor with the domination of the world.
>
> For Irigaray, "sharing breath" is an important aspect of this aspired for spiritual eroticism, giving birth to life and each other and making of a spiritual community. For Irigaray, "This proto-ethical plane of shared breath is the eternal germ of a spiritual community, i.e, a community of embodied individuals, caring for each other" (quoted in Skof 2011: 136).

[13] A poem written by my friend Francis Regis Bouquizabout "Le Trdoubador," the wandering musicians in medieval France can

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be of interest. Also see the following line from the poem in French tells us how the troubader visit from place to place:

Je suis le troubader du chemin qui me mene vers Lui
Et le passager des temps visibles, invisibles [..]

Also this poem "On Wings" by Rabi Narayan Dash (2007) can help us realize many meanings of growing wings:

When I emerged
Broken and aimless
She came out on to her terrace
To ask if I had seen a flying cat
And a little sparrow crying in sorrow
If I knew leaves are already yellow.
The world I came of, seeking
Care, if I am I love with
Money or work with a
Passion for becoming
Somebody and something
I have already read
'the child is the father to man'
Sharing her words and unending dream
I started to scream:
'God! Return me to her,
To child, the mother!"

About wings, Rumi tells us about its significance in the following ways: "Something open our wings, something makes boredom and hurt disappear."

[14] When I present these three modes of being, I always ask what are the words for these in local mother languages. While presenting it in Hanoi, my Vietenese partiticpants told me that the word for earthworm is *Konchin*, for garderner is *Kechia* and for bird *Lantivuan*. During our conversation we created a symphony of *knochingr*, *kechia* and *lantivuan*.

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11

Literature and Social Transformation: Chittaranjan Das as Creative Critic and Organic Intellectual

John Clammer

The work of Chitta Ranjan Das spanned many genres: sociology, fiction, literary criticism, diaries and collections of letters, essays on political and current topics and treatises on education, and was produced in a number of languages including his native Oriya, English, German and Danish (for a good sampling and a bibliography of his principle works see Giri 2011). His *oeuvre* spanned fifty years of output and could of course be approached through a traditional biography of the writer or a conventional literary history. But a more fruitful approach, I would suggest, is to begin precisely with the border-crossing qualities of Das' writings, and to build from there an appreciation not only of his role in Indian literature, but equally of the fundamental questions that his writing raises when seen from the broader perspective of literary theory and of the relationships between literature and society, and in particular of its role in promoting social transformation. It is from this angle that I will approach his work and life since it

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allows us to ask questions that are at the heart of Das' work including the role of the writer in society, the place of "indigenous" literature in the wider literary canon and the place of the imaginative life in the wider economy and ecology of culture as a whole.

In the contemporary world with its multiple environmental crises, conflicts and violence, persisting poverty and social exclusion, the question must inevitably arise of the role of the arts in general and of literature specifically in the context of this essay in such a world. Do they have any positive role other than entertainment and distraction, or are they merely the icing on a rapidly decaying and disintegrating cake? Without naming the problem in exactly this way, it was to implicitly answering this question that much of Chitta Ranjan Das' work was devoted. For he clearly recognized that a simply functionalist approach to trying identify the role of the arts in society would be totally inadequate and theoretically shallow. Rather, to answer the question more fully, we should ask what constitutes a society's self-understanding? Its modes of self-representation? Its internal hermeneutics? And how, methodologically speaking, can we gain access to this deep cultural grammar of a society? Das' original professional career was as a rural sociologist and teacher of the subject in Agra and elsewhere, and as a sociologist he would have been aware that such questions arise not only in the sociology of the arts, but equally in relation to such intractable subjects as religion, suicide and the emotions.

A successful answer to these questions cannot be gained through questionnaires and the other technical apparatus of social inquiry, but requires a much more interpretative and sensitive approach, one indeed that points us to an understanding of the role of the arts as a society's deep and least ideological grammar: its modes of expressivity, its paramount way of structuring its relationship to the spiritual and its vehicle for forming, exploring and managing its emotional dynamics. The

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arts then are not separate from life: they are both its expression and its means of self-exploration. Das recognized this profoundly in his own writings as revealed in his comments on the role of literary criticism in society:

> The new critics are critically aware. They are beginning to adapt themselves to the new fact that literature is not a special pursuit and cannot be cultivated away from life, that it is very much a part of life and society. And what is more, it not only has to interpret life and society as they are, it has to probe deeper to find out why they are, what they are and in that context, to suggest new directions and impetuses. This new criticism will not simply destroy: it will fulfil and provide us with the next insights (Das 1982)

The role of literature is both analytical and prophetic: it can at its best both critique and expose the patterns of existing society and provide guidelines to future possibilities by nurturing the imagination, that most powerful of all the human faculties, and the role of the literary critic is to act as a kind of midwife to these two dialectically linked processes. Das is not alone in this vision of the arts and many examples can be found of a parallel kind of thinking. The artist and art theorist Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger advances the same idea in a different language:

> Artists continually introduce into culture all kinds of Trajan horses from the margins of their consciousness; in that way the limits of the symbolic are transgressed all the time by art. It is quite possible that many work-products carry subjective traces of their creators, but the specificity of works of art is that their materiality cannot be detached from ideas, perceptions, emotions, consciousness, cultural meaning and that being interpreted and reinterpreted is their cultural destiny. This is one of the reasons why works of art are

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symbologenic" (Ettinger 1992:196).

The arts thus both interpret existing cultural symbols and create new ones: the imaginative repertoire of a culture is constantly enriched and expanded by the images, ideas, visions, symbols and representations introduced into it through the creative process.

Running through Chitta Ranjan's work can be seen these themes, which can be summarized under four analytical headings (not necessarily actually distinct in the writings themselves). 1. Critique: but in the forms specific to literature and the arts (as distinct from those of say critical theory in sociology, or overtly political analysis. 2. The exposure of subjectivities in the unique form that the novel as opposed to social science texts can achieve. As the novelist Yann Martel, author of the prize winning *Life of Pi*, puts it in one of his later works: " Fiction, being closer to the full experience of life, should take precedence over non-fiction. Stories – individual stories, family stories, national stories – are what stitch together the disparate elements of human existence into a coherent whole." 3. The role of imagination, perhaps the most important human faculty, in interpreting the world and in formulating alternative futures. The role of the critic and historian of literature becomes paramount here. Over half a century ago the art historian and cultural critic Ananda Coomaraswamy proposed the concept of the "creative critic" whose role is not to negatively deconstruct the creative writer or painter's work, but to assist in drawing out and explicating the original vision that moved the artist to create in the first place (Coomaraswamy 1948:69). 4. The creating and nurturing of local or "indigenous" literature. The anthropologist Marshall Sahlins has rightly pointed out that all knowledge is actually local or indigenous, but because of the historical mechanisms of colonialism and globalization, certain forms (such as Western scientific knowledge) have

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become hegemonic although there is no special evidence that they are superior to other forms of local knowledge (Sahlins 1996).

Many forms of literature already embody alternative realities in one form or another –utopian writings, science fiction, fairy tales, fantasy. It is significant however that Chitta Ranjan did not pursue these genres, the first two certainly being still weakly developed in India writing where realism still predominates, but drew rather on more familiar sources – history, including the history of especially Oriya literature, oral literature of the kind still to be found in rural India, the songs and poetry arising directly from the experience of local peoples, especially the socially and ethnically excluded ones, and myth, the Indian and specifically Hindu cosmos being richly populated with stories of gods and goddesses, of supernatural events, of heroes and villains, many of whom now show up not only in local literatures, but in film, especially perhaps in the south Indian Tamil movies. These expressive forms are not only of interest in their own right, but embody forms of social knowledge, ecological practices and modes of interpreting and managing the external world and its inevitable problems. So called indigenous literature (i.e. literature not yet discovered by the global arbiters of taste often due to their linguistic inadequacies) is most likely to be closer to these local realities than is "global" (usually Western) literature. The literature of the "margins" (defined geographically, not in relation to its quality) may in fact have a deeper significance that the literature of the "center". The French cultural theorists/ philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have coined the term "minor literature" to refer to literary productions that rather than engage directly with ideological issues or personal symbolism, turn to a different form of radical practice – that of transforming the limitations – their lack of economic resources, invisibility or marginality in society, lack of access to the literary and intellectual resources of metropolitan writers – into its

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strength (Deleuze and Guattari 1986).While Das' literary output can hardly be termed "minor" in either its volume or range, it does have two important parallels with this concept of "minor literature" (in which category Deleuze and Guattari tellingly place Kafka, hardly a minor writer by any standards, but yet one distinctive in his "methodology" and the range of his writing): notably its eclecticism on the one hand, ranging over and drawing on sources from sociology, myth, folk tales, the work of other Oriya writers and a considerable range of international literature, and on the other its independence of any explicit ideology, leading to a distinctive aesthetics and to a form of social critique quite different from conventional political analysis. In this respect Das reminds one of the Nobel Prize winning French author Albert Camus who also developed a non-political critique of society drawing on his own childhood experiences as a sibling in a poor family in what was then French Algeria:

> Poverty, first of all, was never a misfortune for me: it was radiant with sunlight. Even my revolts were lit up by the sun. These revolts were almost always, I think I can say this in all honesty, revolts on everyone's behalf, aimed at lifting up everybody's life into the light. Quite possibly my heart was not naturally disposed to this kind of love. But circumstances helped me. To correct my natural indifference, I was placed halfway between poverty and the sun. Poverty prevented me from thinking that all is well under the sun and in history; the sun taught me that history is not everything (Camus 1979:18).

Deep critique can in fact come not only from the resources of Marxism and other by now conventional critical methodologies or bodies of theory, but equally from a turning to the realities of actually existing societies and the lives of those least privileged within them on the one hand, and to nature on the other.

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It is perhaps through these insights and the distinctive body of writing that emerged from them that has prevented Das from being categorized in the now rather time-worn category of the "post-colonial writer." In a temporal sense he largely is, but yet has by the range and distinctiveness of his output emancipated himself from this category of the "subaltern" writer. This he is not, but rather a distinctive and original voice addressing both the ills of society as he saw them (and indeed the shortcomings of its leaders such as Gandhi and Tagore, or rather perhaps of the narrow interpretations placed on their immense contributions by many of their no doubt well-meaning followers), a position that transcends the language of "schools" and "tendencies" so frequently imposed on literature by its scholarly commentators, who are themselves so rarely also producers of literature themselves. Das' work in fact raises other and in the long run more significant issues: the in-principle equality of knowledges, exposed by the very relativization of knowledge brought about by globalization, the uncharted relationship between development and social change (and forms of social injustice) and aesthetics, the relationship between literature and social theory, and the means by which we can imaginatively chart our desired futures and theorize the means to attain those futures. Das would certainly have agreed with Pablo Picasso, speaking of his celebrated anti-war painting *Guernica,* that the role of the arts is not to be merely decorative or entertaining but to be a weapon of struggle against the inhumanity that brings about acts of violence and injustice (Picasso 1945, quoted in Read 1997:160).

Any engagement with the work of Chitta Ranjan then must agree that he is not just an "indigenous" writer, producing literature in a not widely read language in a neglected corner of a developing country. On the contrary, his work contains a model for an engagement with the world, one that crosses the

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boundaries of literature as conventionally understood, sociology, literary history and criticism, social criticism, philosophy and folklore. It is clear that the objective of these interventions is not simply critical, but more one of affirmation, of encouragement and of drawing attention to the rich imaginative and creative resources inherent in almost any society, and certainly in his native Orissa. The object then is not "art for art's sake", but the transformation of life, culture, society and literature itself. In Das' work this proceeds through a number of steps that could well be emulated by the wider literary world: the bringing to light of "local" literatures and their associated cultural history, the promotion of what might be termed an aesthetic education in readers and young people, the deconstruction of dehumanizing traditions however much sanctified by time and convention, dialogue with other major thinkers, and a commitment to a moral and social position that would be uncomfortable in fashionable Western social and cultural theory with its alleged "value freedom."

The result is a new model of literature: one beyond postcolonial criticism, identifying with the victims of development and in this specific context, with the betrayed social revolution of post-independence India that has enriched a few while leaving caste, poverty and corruption fundamentally unchallenged, an aesthetics of courage willing to fight against ugliness in all its forms, the recognition of translation as a true and valuable literary activity, the understanding of poetry not as a minority hermetic taste but as a social activity and the understanding of art as social struggle, as part of what might be termed an integral aesthetics in which beauty and truth are no longer separated. Das' work then represents a new form of cosmopolitanism in an age when that term is being increasingly widely used, but usually in the context of a globalized, wealthy, jet-setting group whose lives rarely touch the realities of the

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great majority whose only function, if any, in their world, is as servants and labourers. Rather, as Imtiaz Ahmed has rightly said "Writing empowers, but it ought to empower the disempowered, not the already powerful" (Ahmed 2010:3). That sentence stands as an excellent epigraph to the work of Chitta Ranjan Das.

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Dwelling as a Ground for Education 12

Marcus Bussey

> This is an altogether different school beyond the limits of these worldly schools. In order to appreciate the expanded consciousness of the human mind, the school also extends into the sky and the forest and the mind receives profound assurance from everywhere.
>
> —Chitta Ranjan Das (2007), *Letters from a Forest School*, p. 72.

Chitta Ranjan Das wrote in his youthful book *Letters from a Forest School* that 'revolutions begin in the head' (2007: 32), yet the passion of his words belie the fact that they also, and perhaps more importantly, begin in the heart. This short work is a meditation on the struggle to reenact education and the process(es) of learning beyond the standard space(s) of institutional form. The forest for Das was a real place yet it was also a metaphor for the *terra incognita* he, his staff and his students encountered when they set out in 1955 to trial a post-Basic School in the forests of Orissa.[1] In the forest Das and his students and staff were able to become free and to *dwell*, in the Heidegerrian sense (Young, 2002), in a state of openness where, for a few years, the expectations and demands of institutional education were put aside. This *dwelling* in the forest allowed Das to explore the essence of his humanity, that common humanity, from which all natural learning emerges.

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In this context Das by turns followed and led his students into the forest as a place of potentiality in which human understanding emerged from their joint actions rather than being imposed by external syllabus or curriculum. The *forest-as-curriculum* offered a much more interesting and lively learning context than that found in traditional learning environments. In the forest there were floods and dangerous animals, the building and maintenance of school rooms and the relationships with other forest dwellers all juxtaposed with the perpetual negotiations between the school and the state. This all offered an expanded human context for reflection and the kind of dwelling that, as Das notes, "accepted the forest as an instrument to understand the totality of human life more keenly" (ibid: 73).

Distance and the Gaze

Das' retreat to the forest was an experiment not unlike Thoreau's retreat in the 1840's to nature in his cabin by Walden Ponds (Thoreau, 1996). Thoreau sought distance from humanity in order to better understand it; Das sought distance from systems of order that prevented the realization of human potential. Yet Thoreau lived in relative isolation while Das was immersed in the lives of his students and staff. Furthermore, both shared a romantic appreciation for the struggle to realize one's potential and a romantic distrust for the distractions of life which side track the unwary from realizing this goal. For Das it was modern civilization itself that turned us all from deeper realizations and it was the core mission of education as he saw it to challenge, rather than affirm, this fact. He noted, "we would not be hassled by civilization and its consumerist ideology. By no means would we struggle to renounce the world and seek deliverance but at least there would be some opportunity to observe the world dispassionately from a distance" (2007: 14).

For Das we find this distance is only partial – it is distance from *distraction-from-relationship*. Only in relationship he argues

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can we do the deep learning and bridge the chasm between learner and world. Learning based on the distance of the gaze, the colonial distance of gazing upon the other so as to tame, label, codify and order it is to be avoided (Deleuze & Guattari 1994). It is the narcotic of modernity and despite India having recently gained political independence he is clear it has not yet begun to gain epistemological independence (Das 2007: 336-39). The gaze is maintained in the educational bureaucracy that has retained systems of practice and surveillance that perpetuate colonial attitudes to order and knowledge (ibid: 68).

Immanent Internal Limits

In this Das is offering an early critique of what Deleuze and Guattari later called geophilosophy in which the colonized, and that means the majority of humanity in both the developed and developing world, internalized the order of the colonizers. In a sense the distance of the colonial gaze was internalized so that the colonial bureaucrats whom Das rails against constantly have become distant from themselves; disconnected from their own identities at both the personal and civilizational levels. As Deleuze and Guattari note:

> The social field no longer refers to an external limit that restricts it from above, as in the empires, but to immanent internal limits that constantly shift by extending the system, and that reconstitute themselves through displacement. External objects are now only technological, and only internal rivalries remain. A world market extends to the ends of the earth before passing into the galaxy: even the skies become horizontal. This is not a result of the Greek endeavor but a resumption, in another form and with other means, on a scale hitherto unknown, which nonetheless relaunches the combination for which the Greeks took the initiative: democratic imperialism, colonizing democracy. (1994, p. 97)

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This new world of India in 1955 when Das wrote was experiencing what it meant to have the skies become horizontal. The rhetoric of democracy, present throughout Das's narrative, is strong yet the reality as he keeps reminding the reader is that 'the ancient soul of the culture...' of India is being denied (p. 73) and that true democracy cannot be furthered by centralized political and educational structures (p. 70-71). The multiplicity that is India he argues cannot be met in a 'single path'. Yet, this is precisely what educational officials were doing. Das experienced a deep resistance to innovation and this is he felt was based on fear. This leads him to meditate on the role of fear in culture which really sets the scene for a critique of the centralist aspirations of the State's educational officials. As he notes: "Strange fears dog our society as they do our schools" (Das 2007: 77). There is nothing new in such fears as they are part of the fabric of culture itself as Das tells us:

> The early man lived in the caves out of fear of the forest. After long years of civilization, the coward man has continued to retain the traces of the caves inside his dwelling place. So despite the yearnings of his heart to get connected with everything else, his way of life has mainly kept him apart. The cave of his house is providing him the empty consolation of being safe (ibid: 75).

Dwelling-in-Relationship

The cave is, like the forest, both a real place and also an inner state. The emptiness of the cave is to be equated with the emptiness of modernity's inner life. All now is projected outward in an attempt to control the uncontrollable (namely the people – the most dangerous resource a democracy has). In this the cave is extended as a wound in the soul of India and her people – thus we follow the logic outlined by Deleuze and Guattari above in which 'immanent internal limits' are constantly extended into the lives of people. Das is fighting for an *authentic democracy* that

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grows out of collective *dwelling-in-relationship*. What India, along with all modernizing societies is in fact receiving (yes the passivity is intentional here – even when there is a physical struggle for democracy) are forms of 'democratic imperialism, colonizing democracy' in which we get what Das ironically quipped to be 'old wine in new bottles' (2007: 8).

This brings us back to *dwelling*. For Das dwelling is all about the consciousness of relationship. For him learning is a relational process in which we find ourselves and our fulfillment in relation to others. And this sense of others is not confined in any anthropocentric sense. For Das community and *dwelling-in-relationship* is extended to the entire universe. Thus he writes passionately:

> Our school veritably embraces the entire universe. The effort in our school is not directed towards securing a job by pleasing a few officers. The passion for knowledge, the ability of discrimination and responsiveness to emotion with which we have set up this Forest School, should also inculcate in us the patience of a learner who enters every realm of the world with an inquisitive mind. Everyone in this wide world is our guru. The human life with all its joys, sorrows, love and wonder is our teacher. We seek to know human beings of this land to enrich knowledge of history and geography. We have tried to find answers for the various human problems with all the resources of our learning. We will never back away from any opportunity to share the joys and sufferings of human beings. After the initiation in this Forest School as a student, we shall remain a student throughout our lives (2007: 23).

From this *dwelling-in-relationship* emerges all true education as the self in all its possibilities is only ever realized through encounter with the other. This means that education must challenge the

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distance of the gaze that is at the heart of modernist learning and the geophilosophical project that underpins it. Authentic democracy is one which affirms 'human life with all its joys, sorrows, love and wonder' and is not aimed at compliance and the quest for job and security.

The Great Schism

Yet the colonized gaze affirms a fundamental schism of object-subject that Das repeatedly rejects. Such is the power of this schism that it permeates all levels of our being and is powerfully enacted through our education systems worldwide as a normative exercise in establishing the hegemony of system over process, structure over soul. Such a hegemony of course is essential if democracy is to serve the purpose of the state and the ruling elites rather than the betterment of society as a whole.[2] Thus, throughout his book Das points to the binaries of the garden and the court (p. 16), the student and the teacher (p. 20), the home and the school (p. 27), manual work and intellectual work (p.31), body and mind (p. 34), village and town (p. 40) and nature and culture (p. 73). In all these carefully crafted and heavily loaded dualisms lies a power differential which privileges the latter over the former. Yet all such constructs deny *dwelling-in-relationship* and the educational possibilities that ground the learner in a positive and equitable relationship with his / her world.

In this schism lies the power and tragedy of the modern education system. In its abolition lies our hope for a future in which education promotes liberation from fear and limitation (Bussey 2010). The experiment of the Forest School plumbed this problem and discovered first hand that real education grows out of meaningful experience and a sense of learning as service to a whole that integrates and affirms the parts. In this the forest, as an all encompassing context for a school, offered a ground for *dwelling-in-relationship* that swept aside the schism between teacher and taught. All were students in life. Thus Das, his students and

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staff discovered what Jacques Rancière describes as the ignorance of true learning in which the distance upon which modern education has been based – the distance between authority and submission, master and pupil, knowledge and ignorance – is collapsed into a relational process of emergence through learning-in-relationship.

Re-enchantment of Education

Thus learning in the Forest School begins with the subversion of the pedagogical myth of modernity which, as Rancière notes, "divides the world into two" (1991, p. 7). The purpose of this division was to demonstrate the ignorance of the student in order to reify the hierarchy upon which modernity is premised.

> From the moment this slogan of duality is pronounced, all the perfecting of the ways of *making understood*, that great preoccupation of men of methods and progressives, is progress toward stultification. The child who recites under the threat of the rod obeys the rod and that's all: he will apply his intelligence to something else. But the child who is *explained to* will devote his intelligence to the work of grieving: to understanding, that is to say, to understanding that he doesn't understand unless he is explained to. He is no longer submitting to the rod, but rather to a *hierarchical world of intelligence* (Italics in original Rancière 1991: 8).

Such a hierarchy is what Das was challenging at his post-Basic school through an emphasis on manual work, service, personal reflection, the reading of quality literature, and the constant engagement with others in a busy and disorderly industry that allowed for surprise and for a grounded learning that enriched the inner world of the learner. In this all things become the possibility of more learning and this enriching of the world offers the possibility of re-enchantment for both the learner and for

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the object of a joyful learning in which becoming-whole is the object of a reformulated pedagogy based not on hierarchies of power but on the joys of *dwelling-in-relationship*. 'When a subject is mastered it manifests itself mainly in the form of joy" (Das 2007: 7).

End notes:

[1] Basic schools were a idea the Gandhi promoted to integrate and ground education in a world-oriented life affirming learning process in which students engaged in 'manual labor, corporate living and self-reliance' – see Das, pages 165-167.

[2] Jean Anyon in her wonderful critique of urban education in the United States makes this point: "Governments and corporate elites depend on education to deflect the pain inflicted by the economy" (2005, p. 199)

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13 A Brief on an Approximation to Chitta Ranjan Das

Ivan Marquez

Very seldom does reading the work of a writer makes me want to meet them in person. Chitta Ranjan Das did this to me. Long ago I gave up on the Platonic notion that Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are manifestations of one and the same thing. But in Chitta Ranjan Das I felt this convergence. Chitta Bhai was a genius. Furthermore he was a genius who chose to stay physically close to his birthroots. His life spanned a historical epoch of great fertility and upheaval in India. He was of Orissa, of India, of the world, and of the universe. He was Orissan, Indian, Man, and Human. His life was one of constant striving toward transcendence: personal/individual, social/collective, material/cultural.

Chitta Bhai was engaged in cultural work. He saw culture as a site where humans construct their individual and collective identities. He took culture seriously not because of elitism but because he felt that human consciousness is produced and reproduced in that realm. For him, culture was material and spiritual simultaneously. Thus the form and content of culture mattered. Also the ground of culture was all important because it gave birth and nourished human subjectivity and agency. You are what you breathe, drink, and eat. His life project was one of

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combining the universal and the local, learning and pedagogy, life and letters, stark realism and spiritual yearning.

My first acquaintance with his work was through proofreading his 1948 dissertation on Baruch de Spinoza in 2008. Later I read his introduction to the work of the Danish pedagogue, Kristen Kold, one of the founders of the folk high school movement in Denmark. Finally I read two anthologies of his work edited by Ananta Kumar Giri, one on theory, literature, and criticism, another one on education.

Chitta Bhai was cosmopolitan and knew many languages but he chose to live in Orissa, his birthplace, and to write prodigiously in Oriya, a regional, non-hegemonic language. This was done deliberately. He was convinced that language carried the life and memory of a people and that to preserve, communicate, and engage with that lived experience one had to use the oral language that accompanied that life, for not only meaning was lost in translation but lives themselves and the richness of those lives. Writing in Oriya was simultaneously a personal, social, cultural, and political act. To save and promote (from the Latin, *promotus*, to move forward) himself, the people of Orissa, its history and culture, it was important to write in Oriya.

He also wrote in English (and other languages) for he understood that life transcends one's regional horizons and also because he knew that one must engage with Empire and one should communicate with the entire world. That is how one helps the human species in its efforts toward self-transcendence. I believe that in an earlier time and in a different place he would have written in Latin. His love for universal wisdom led him to translate numerous classics of world literature into Oriya, just as it led him to write on Oriya literature, history, politics, and culture in English. These literary and cultural transactions took much of his time. But he also spent much of his time in education.

For him, education was the foundation of a better future built by better people with better relationships, on the basis of a

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better life lived by better values. Education was the vehicle and schools were the generative sites to undertake the social revolution that was meant to follow the political revolution that led to Indian independence—the social revolution that was promised but then forgotten by the generation of political nationalist leaders of the era of independence struggle. Following in the footsteps of Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, The Mother, and Gandhi, he spent long periods of his life devoted to integral education. His pedagogical efforts met the resistance of government and society at large for they were perceived to foster social and political non-alignment. Notwithstanding he persevered.

Although Chitta Bhai is an Indian writer, from my vantage point, I find his sensibility and path closer to Spinoza, Søren Kierkegaard and Albert Camus than to the Indian pantheon of great 20th century men. There is an individualism, a radicalism, a humanism, and an Enlightenment spirit in him that feels very Western European and very existentialist. It is a spirit of rebellion that shares much with Kierkegaard and Camus. It embodies revolt in spite of and against what appears to be an absurdist undercurrent—a bet on joyful living in spite of life. This is a joy that has less to do with pleasure, happiness, and optimism and more to do with an uncompromised freedom of conscience and clarity of understanding, with the plenitude of being who one is, fully and without adulteration, and with the power borne by this. It is Spinoza's joy.

In the end, I think this might be Das's biggest contribution to his own project of self-transcendence, of moving himself and humanity to the next level of being, as absolutely enduring as it is utterly ephemeral. And it might have been his most subversive political contribution and his most radical cultural offering. Contrary to other Indian sages, he did not repudiate this world and escape to another realm all alone, but instead he stayed put in his corner of the world and lived out his unadulterated genius in a place, in a time, and in relation to/with others, lovingly, in spite of it all.

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Literature, Philosophy and Personal Transformation 14

Swami Srihariprasad

I am very happy to be here today not only because the subject of the seminar is so interesting and absorbing but also because Dr Ananta Kumar Giri is a remarkable person dealing with an extremely interesting subject. Reading his papers on late Chitta Ranjan Das, I was very impressed that the way Chitta Ranjan Das was able to marry the true spiritual with an effort to change society. His efforts to start schools in villages based on the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo is very laudable. He was not shy of mentioning his following the traditions of Sri Aurobindo and Sarala Das.

"One mark of our time is that a philosopher who wins a following among theologians is handicapped among philosophers" (Cobb 1992, 83).[1] This is because religion is seen as dogmatic and science as reason-oriented. It is offensive to a thinking person to be told what to think and what not to think. The main objection is that science does not claim to be all knowing and that its knowledge base is constantly increasing while religion has certain beliefs which are not only beyond question, but also appear outdated. Science is always progressing and today's knowledge is outdated tomorrow. While science is

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always updating its knowledge, religion is defending old forts. Whitehead says, "Religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science."

That the concepts of religion are the final word in wisdom and knowledge is not approved by the Indian Philosophical tradition which says that Brahman, the Absolute reality is *ananthum* and therefore unknowable in its totality.

However both science and religion to a great degree have much similarity in method. The senses and mind play a part in supplying information to the self which then analyses it and determines the actions with which it should respond. However, science is descriptive and merely observes nature and sees how the processes observed can be classified and then used for the benefit of humankind. It does not deal with the ethics of any situation though it may point out the difficulties that may follow if a particular course is followed. Charles A Coulson and Harold Schilling, both physicists feel that "the methods of science and religion have much in common." Schilling said that science, like religion has "a threefold structure–of experience, theoretical interpretation and practical application," which corresponds to our idea of *sravana*, *manana* and *nidhidhyasana*.

Coulson pointed out that science like religion "advances by creative imagination" and not by "mere collecting of facts," and that religion does "involve critical reflection on experience not unlike what goes on in religion."[ii]

The modern view of "non-overlapping magisteria" (NOMA) suggested by the evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould,[iii] that science and religion deal with fundamentally separate parts of human experience and when each stays within its own domain, coexist peacefully. This is the most sensible and practical view and which is not unfortunately subscribed to and so we have ridiculous situations where religious leaders who know nothing about science try to give their views a scientific veneer and worse still pronounce judgment on matters they know nothing of and

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scientists trying to analyse experience which they have not the slightest understanding of.

The tradition of story telling is one of the oldest in the world. Paul Mcghee mentions in his work on the origins of humour that groups of monkeys sit around and talk with each other and that at times after one monkey had spoken the others would burst into laughter.

The tradition of story telling has been always a part of human activity. It has been used for entertainment, moral improvement, political change and spiritual development. This is the basis of literature as we know it.

It has always been part of the philosophical tradition that story telling has been used to convey philosophical ideas and literature both in its written and oral form have been used in all cultures to spread ideas.

In literature whatever it maybe, the protagonists act (as in life) on the basis of their own philosophy. Everyone has an idea why he or she does anything, but we do not know how to express them. In literature the philosophy comes out in the speeches, the comments by the author and the actions of the protagonists.

The idea of *Dharma* is generally present in most types of literature. Even in those tragic or pessimistic forms of literature in which evil doers triumph and good people suffer, the ideal of *Dharma* exists even though its defeat is chronicled.

The late Dame Agatha Christie felt that the detective novel was the successor of the old morality plays. This is very true and even of the often violent westerns, and in the last twenty years the tales of the battles between Harry Potter and the evil beings of this world who try to enslave the others we see this same desire – that good should triumph over evil. Since all literary traditions are basically historical we find descriptions of actual historical situations which are the basis on which the philosophical ideas are built. These situations exist in the oldest literature of the world, namely the Vedas, but came to its fulfillment in the Puranas.

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The *Itihasas* and the *Puranas* contain much historical and non-historical literature. Sometimes historical stories like that of Raja Harischandra are treated differently in variously in different books. This is because as Chitta Ranjan pointed out, as quoted by Dr Giri, all literature is a *drushti*, a view point.

Dr V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar says in his pioneering work, *War in Ancient India,* that Ksatriya boys were required to spend their afternoons listening to stories from the Itihasas and the puranas. This is not merely for purposes of entertainment as might be supposed but to increase awareness of the traditions and since the princes would be dispensing justice later in their lives, it would be necessary for them to be able to quote precedents which would support their judgments. When Vikarna addressed the assembly (sabha) at the time when Draupadi was dragged there, he protested and quoted not only proverbs but also addressed the assembly in a very learned manner. When Draupadi pleaded with Yudhistira in the forest to return to the capital and seize power, she gave many examples in support of her forceful arguments.

The *Itihasas* are valuable as a source of knowledge of not only history but also social customs and habits of the time. But the propagation of moral values are what they are used for most. In the Mahabharata this is very clear. Interesting no one philosophical group has primacy. The opinions of an atheist, a Carvaka was also given a place. Veda Vyasa merely records views of people just as they gave them without appreciation or disapprobation. Only in rare cases are any sort of comment other than routine praise offered.

The history of the philosophical tradition of India is like the journey of a river. The source of the river is pure small and powerful. It finds its way by its force and adapting itself to circumstances it flows to its object the sea. It squeezes through stony gorges and spreads out where it can; adapting itself to circumstances, but never ceasing to flow towards the sea.

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The philosophical literature of India has been like the river. It flows to its object namely the attainment of both the highest beatitude and prosperity in this life. Just as the river takes the appropriate path the philosophical tradition adapted itself to the times and reinterpreted and reinvented itself to the times. Thus we see a new interpretation of *Asvamedha* sacrifice in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad that absolutely made unnecessary the earlier *dravya yajna* that was done.This was not to say that the *yajna* done earlier was useless but to reinterpret it according to the times and to preserve the spirit of independent enquiry which was the Pole star that guided the ancient thinkers.

The statement in the Mundaka Upaishad that the Vedas that were *apara vidya*, Sri Krishna's statement that the flowery panegyric words of the Vedas that praised empty ritualism were useless, Sri Sathguru's bold assertion that prayer and philosophy without a corresponding will to transform oneself into the ideal that we claim as ours, is just a waste of time is part of the continuing tradition that places practice before empty preaching that has always existed in the Indian philosophical tradition.

The constant reinterpretations that have to be made to make religion and philosophy relevant to the people of the day is the dharma of the tradition and its *tapasya* is to hold on to the essential truths of the tradition without compromising with any of them and yet adapting to the new realities of life.

This is reflected in the literature of India. The great traditions of Indian literature may or may not be totally religious but the philosophical ideals of self transformation are paid some sort of homage in every situation. Even the *Dashakumaracarita* of Dandi which is a sort of ancient Sanskrit Sidney Sheldon type thriller, basic sympathy is paid to *Dharmic* ideals.

There are three incidents which illustrate the difficulties of holding onto one's principles in our lives and how the rishis give us indications and we must make up our own minds on what we should do. In the Chhandogya Upanishad[iv] we see the story of Ushasti Chakrayana.

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Around the time the crops were devastated in the land of the Kurus due to termites there lived in a village of a person who owned elephants, Ushasti and his very young wife. Having nothing to eat he roamed about. He saw the person who owned elephants eating some beans. He begged him for some beans. The elephant owner answered, "I have only these beans which I have now that I am eating." Ushasti answered, "Give some of them to me." The elephant owner said, "here is some water which you can drink." Ushasti said, "That would be leavings (*ucchista*)." The elephant owner said, "Are these beans also leavings?" Ushasti said, "Water I can get anywhere, but not food."

The second story is from the Mahabharata. During the battle, in order to prove his point to the Pandavas about how he felt that he rated the saving of life much more than the keeping of a vow, Sri Krishna told them the story of a Kausika Brahmana. We don't know his name just his lineage. Once when he was doing tapas in the forest a man who was being chased by thieves. The man out paced the thieves and they did not know where he had gone. They asked the Rishi where he had gone and the Rishi proud of his vow to speak the truth always, had told them where the hapless victim had gone. They followed the man who would have otherwise escaped and killed and robbed him. Because of his unintentional assistance in this murder, the rishi was denied access to the heaven which he was yearning for.

The third story is also from the Mahabharata.[v] Once during a great famine the Rishi Viswamithra was desperately hungry. Wherever he went there was no food. He then came upon a *chandala* eating the flesh of a dog. He said, "Chandala, give me some of that food that you are eating." The Chandala replied, "O great Rishi, this is flesh, and the flesh of a dog. I am a chandala. On all counts this should be rejected by you."

The Rishi answered, "Chandala, If I do not eat this food I will die. If I eat this I will live. If I die, I can do nothing for the world. If I live, I can do some *pariharam* for this sin and then do

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good for the world. Therefore the preservation of life is the most important thing and we should do that. So give me that flesh."

So then we have three incidents which illustrate the problems of a situation where there is little clarity on what is the correct *dharma* to be followed. This *apad* dharma tells us how we should behave in such situations but as is typical in the Indian philosophical tradition, a wide latitude is allowed and each person has his own definition which he or she follows. Each person who is involved in such a conflict situation sees the world and his situation through a perspective that has two inputs, one his nature or mental make up, the second being the environment both mental and physical where he grew up or lives. This is clear from the second and third instances cited above. The Rishi found only one way in which he could relate to his situation – by answering the question of the robbers in what he thought was truthful.

How else could he have reacted?

1. He could have refused to answer
2. He could have tried to prevail upon them not to pursue their victim
3. Misguide the robbers by telling them a lie.

These matters have been dealt at length by the late Bimal Krishna Matilal in his essay on "Moral Dilemmas."[vi] But we must see the alternatives carefully, by refusing to answer or trying to prevail upon them not to pursue their victim, the Rishi would have been subjected to torture, violence and possibly death. While it is easy for us to say that it would have been the right thing for him to give up his life, he may not have relished it. He could have told the robbers a justifiable lie by misguiding them. Since there is no selfish benefit in it, it would have been quite a small sin. For as Sri Krishna says the saving of lives of beings shall always be my first priority (Praninam Avadhas Tata Sarvajyayan mato mama).[vii] This is an opinion that appears to have guided Sri Krishna at all times, both before and after Kurukshetra. Sri Krishna said that though the rishi was

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dharmakama, he did not attain his goal because he was unwise (*apandita*) and a fool (*mudha*).

In the case of Maharishi Viswamithra he did not have any doubts either though his many arguments did not convince the *Chandala* who stuck to his arguments till the end.

However these thoughts did not did not affect them as they were prisoners of their nature and conditioning both social and economic. The Rishi was a *tapasvin*, all his life he had not been exposed to questions of philosophical importance. He had just lived his life in a spirit of unflinching and unwavering conviction. Without that he would not have been able to spend his life in what must have been a dreadful jungle. He did not know any compromise in his life. Unwaveringly he pursued his goal. He therefore did not know why he should compromise now. So he, not knowing that circumstances alter cases, was literal. If he had been wise or had served a *guru* he would have known his alternatives, so Sri Krishna called him an ignorant fool. Viswamitra was basically not a *rishi*, he had spent all his life in action. He had known what it was to retreat and then fight back. Also he was inclined to act first and think later as we see in the case of Trisanku. Courageous and well meaning, he was also fool hardy. He was obsessed by his goal as is seen in his conflict with Vasishta. Throughout the verbal conflict with the *chandala*, he was unyielding and was not willing to be convinced. He had forgotten he was no longer the successful king and military strategist but an all sacrificing Rishi, devoted to all beings. His awareness of his present status and condition was overcome by his past military conditioning and his active nature.

In this we see the superiority of Ushasti, he was always conscious of himself and his situation. Even though he had to break the rule of eating by sharing the food of another person, he cheerfully did so since he had no alternative. However when he was offered water he did not accept it since there was no need for it as water was plentifully available unlike the case of food which was not available. He had to depart from the *shastric* rules

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when it came to food but he restrained himself when he could and returned to the path. So many times we feel we may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. We have done so much wrong a little more won't matter, but a person who is aware of his life and his deeds and wish to progress is always aware of *Dharma* in his life and just as a sailor checks his course every now and then by looking at the sun or the stars, so by being constantly aware of *Dharma* and being aware of our actions and looking at the latter in the light of the former we can avoid wrong actions and therefore unhappiness. This is why it is always said the examples of the Sruthi, or the Vedas takes precedence over other works. And this is why it has been said, that which gives both happiness in this world and the highest beatitude in the next is Dharma."[viii]

Endnotes

[1] "The Philosophy of Charles Hartshorne." *Process Studies* 21/2: 75-84, 1982.

[2] Ian G. Barbour, "Science and Religion Today". In Ian G. Barbour (ed.). *Science and Religion: New Perspectives on the Dialogue*, 3-29. New York, Evanston and London: Harper & Row, 1968.

[3] Stephen Jay Gould. 1999. *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life.* Ballantine Books, 1999.

[4] Chandogya Upanishad 1.10.1

[5] Mahabharata, 12.140 (Santi Parva)

[6] B.K.Matilal, "*Moral Dilemmas*" in *Moral Dilemmas in the Mahabharata*, ed. B.K.Matilal. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1989.

[7] Mahabharata, critical ed. 8.249.20

[8] Vaisesika sutras 1.1.2

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Philosophy, Literature and Social Emancipation 15

S. Paneerselvam

In the postmodern understanding, it is said that language is rhetorical since a language is marked by the slippage of meaning. This means that, when a text is written, the full meaning of it cannot be conveyed. That the text sometimes hides the meaning and that it reveals it later, cannot be considered as a defect of the text. A text gains its meaning in the cultural context; thus, when a text is read after some centuries it was written, a new meaning emerges due to the cultural and historical understanding. Moreover, it can be said that the reading and re-reading of a text gives a new meaning. In this way it could be said that a text hides the meaning. Any set of signs can be explored and interpreted as an organization of language. Hence Derrida argues that there is nothing outside a text. Texts do not exist independently of how they are interpreted. It can be said that the texts are not immutable objects and do not yield immutable messages. They function as *pre-texts* for an incalculably large number of readings. Texts are self-dismantling: they invariably contain gaps, apparent inconsistencies, and uncertainties that cause them to fall or fail by their own criteria.

The *Tirukkural* examines the human life to show how there can be all-round progress in life and how man can live a better

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life. Thus it could be viewed as a critique of life. It examines the present conditions of human life and guides for the betterment of life. Further, in the text, we see a move from "what is" to "what ought to be". The values which are prescribed in the text clearly prove the need for possessing them. The text does not accept life as it is available to us, but gives a direction for improving it so that life would be more meaningful. As a critique of life, the *Tirukkural* prescribes some norms for life. It is possible to prescribe them only after examining the life which man leads; and Tiruvalluvar saw the society as vitiated by some basic evils which have to be eradicated. Thus in the text we find an inseparable relation between value and action. The value-oriented text is also an action-oriented one. Commenting on the importance of value and action, R. Balasubramanian says: "When a person accepts something as a value, he cannot but be engaged in activities conducive to the attainment of the value in question; to accept something as a value is not just for the purpose of talking, but for the purpose of doing." R.M. Hare in *The Language of Morals* says that the logic of value-words should finally result in action. He avers: "The remedy for moral stagnation and decay is to learn to use our value-language for the purpose for which it is designed; and this involves not merely a lesson in talking, but a lesson in doing that which we commend; for unless we are prepared to do this, we are doing no more than lip-service to a conventional standard."

Reading a text is a cultural phenomenon. It is not simply the act in which we engage when we pursue a written text. Our existence in the world and reading of a text are inextricably intertwined, because the world could be conceived as a text. Wolfgang Iser says that all texts leave gaps and that these gaps invite readers to produce their own connections. Thus, besides the "artistic pole", i.e. the author's creation, there is always an "aesthetic pole", i.e. the reader's concretization of the text. The reader tends to unify the text by filling the gaps. The written text encourages readers to participate in the process of its

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construction; it does not offer a static reality, but rather invites us to produce different dimensions of the reality. Tiruvalluvar clearly supports the relation between value and action. The values he prescribes as norms are for the purpose of practising them. Indeed, his *Tirukkural* represents the life-world of the Tamils. In the Western philosophical tradition, two aspects of human existence are considered important. They are: system and the life-world. In Schutz and Goffman, we see these twofold aspects of human existence. Schutz shows that all the modes of intersubjectivity presuppose the life-world. This means that intersubjectivity presupposes the framework of the natural world in which we give meaning to the experience of others. The life-world shows different dimensions of life. David Carr deals with two senses of the life-world, the anthropological and the philosophical. Aron Gurwitsch makes a distinction between culture-sensitive and culture-relative. Goffman talks about the pluralization of the life-worlds. In order to define the process of evolution, we have to make use of the concept of the life-worlds, comprising social, cultural, historical, and linguistic aspects. Explaining the life-world of the Tamils, the *Tirukkural* encompasses a wide spectrum of the cultural, ethical, social, linguistic, political, and emotional aspects of life. The universal outlook of Tiruvalluvar is visible in this. The *Tirukkural* the pride of South India, represents the greatest treasure house of wisdom of the Tamils and the gift of Tamil Nadu to the whole world. It deals *in extenso* with the moral values of life, which foster neighbourliness and love among all men and women, whatever race or community they may belong to. This text has been translated into many languages.

Of all the ethical works in Tamil, the *Tirukkural* is the most well-known and world-renowned. It prescribes certain norms for the well-being of the individual as well as society. It does not contain any word that is extra, and each word conveys a specific meaning. Its ethical principles are applicable to the ruler and the ruled, the rich and the poor, men and women. The norms are

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always applicable to the entire human society. The individual represents the society, and the society reflects the individual. The harmony between these two shows a healthy society. Whether it is knowledge, wealth, or happiness, it should be shared by all. The uniqueness of the *Tirukkural* consists in its thorough elucidation of all the three values: virtue, wealth and love are essential for man. No doubt, texts like *Dharma-sastra*, *Artha-sastra* and *Kama-sutra* speak about righteousness, wealth, and sex, but the scope of these texts is restricted to one particular area alone. But here a single text contains all the principles of life. Moreover, while dealing with wealth, Tiruvalluvar talks about the role of the individual and society. Similarly, the concept of love is depicted in a dignified way; it is not considered as something connected with erotic pleasure. The aesthetic, poetic, and imaginary skill of the author is exhibited in the Book on *Kama*. He has made the notion of love, sacred and divine. There is a thread, which relates all the three principles of life in the text, and that is virtue. Commenting on the significance and the relevance of the text to the world which we live in, V.C. Kulandai Swamy says that the concept of Utopia was discussed by thinkers like Plato, Sir Thomas More, and others, whereas Tiruvalluvar talks about the kingdom of God on earth. For Tiruvalluvar, the principle of equality among people is the basis of life. Kulandai Swamy further explains how Tiruvalluvar has given importance to manual labour which has been neglected and considered inferior by Plato, Manu, and others. For Manu, as well as for Plato, agriculture is something inferior and is meant for Sudras and the working class. But Tiruvalluvar gives importance to agriculture and says that all other professions depend on this only.

Philosophy in India is value-centred. Indian philosophy is often described as a philosophy of values. It is a transvaluation of all values. Philosophy, in the words of Hiriyanna, is a criticism of values. He says: "Philosophy, as understood in India, was essentially concerned with values." The concept of *purusartha* in

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the recent philosophical debates has attained a special significance. Scholars like M. Hiriyanna, Daya Krishna, Rajendra Prasad, R. Balasubramanian, and others have dilated on this issue. Some Indian scholars discuss how *dharma* in the sense of morality can be well conceived on an independent footing and does not at all require any justification from the perspective of moksa. The debate whether moksa as the fourth *purusartha* is realizable in this life itself is a question for philosophers' debate. There are scholars who argue that it is transcendental in nature. For Tiruvalluvar, this is not a problem at all; for he believes that, if all the three values are practised properly, then the fourth is a natural sequence. In other words, the fourth value must follow the first three, and hence he might have thought that it is not necessary for him to discuss the nature of moksa or liberation in the *Tirukkural* It is not that the Tamil literature does not speak of moksa.

Hermeneutics is a method of philosophizing used in the eighteenth century for the interpretation of the texts. Though initially it was used for interpreting the religious texts, later it was extended to the philosophical texts. For example, Schleiermacher who used hermeneutical method in theology defined it as the art of avoiding misunderstanding. Savigny, Boeckh, Steinthal, and Dilthey developed the method of Schleiermacher. Dilthey, who was a historian and the biographer of Schleiermacher, stressed that there is no presuppositionless understanding. The foundation of human science, according to him, lies in understanding. Later, Heidegger explained the need for all interpretation to rise from a previous understanding. He openly refuted the idea that understanding can be presuppositionless. "All interpretation is grounded in a fore-sight, and a fore-conception," says Heidegger. Hermeneutics is concerned at its core with the eternal foundations of all meaning and values. It insists on the relation between the parts and the whole, for correct understanding is possible only by studying the relation between

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the parts and the whole. We can understand the parts of the text only if we understand the whole; similarly, the understanding of the whole becomes complete by understanding the individual parts. Gadamer, in the *Truth and Method,* attempts to refound the notions of tradition and heritage, and also to discover its real nature and foundation. For him, hermeneutics is centred on a theory of interpretation, of the transmission of the stored up riches of the tradition. Interpretation is always open-ended, which means that no interpretation is ever final, thus allowing always a new interpretation. Our understanding grows out of a particular context, and when the context changes, the need for re-interpretation arises. But Gadamer claims that, though re-interpretation may lead to changes in our situation, we cannot free ourselves completely from the given tradition and situation. Here the role of the interpreter is important. Understanding is essentially dialectical. It means that new meaning is born in the interplay that takes place continuously between the past and the present. In every interpretation, the text gives a new meaning. In the *Truth and Method*, Gadamer says: "The meaning of the text surpasses its author not occasionally but always. Thus understanding is not a reproductive procedure, but rather always also a productive one. It suffices to say that one understands differently when one understands at all."

While interpreting an ancient text like the *Tirukkural* we have to take into account the historicity, culture, belief, and the approach of the author. What Tiruvalluvar, the author of the text, conveys is important since the author's intention alone holds good always. Though the interpreter plays a key role in interpreting the text, he cannot forcefully interpret the text according to his convenience. The *Tirukkural* needs a hermeneutical understanding to suit our present historicity and culture. Every text gains a new meaning in the present historicity, and hence interpretation of the text is inevitable. In order to

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understand the meaning of a particular chapter, or even a particular couplet, we have to take into account the meaning intended by the author, which runs throughout the text. The whole-part relation that the modern hermeneuticians talk about is very much relevant here. Though the meaning of a particular couplet is generally apparent, we must take into account the entire chapter as well as the entire text to know the intention of the author. This makes the meaning complete. The universal message which the *Tirukkural* conveys is relevant to the present and the future. The life-world of the Tamils as well as the richness of the Tamil tradition is preserved in the *Tirukkural*, which is always open-ended, and allows new interpretation and understanding, considering the present social values and historical conditions. Though it is an ageless text which transcends time, it must be seen in the light of the present-day problems and issues that are individual, social, political, and economical in nature. In the context of the *Tirukkural*, our present historicity is important, because we are placed in it and not in the past historicity, though it also shapes us. Hence our interpretation of the text should take into account the tradition, the values, the socio-cultural background, which play a significant role in understanding the text.

Though one cannot enter into the historicity of the past, but still the author is very much influenced by his historicity; and for us the present historicity plays a dominant role in understanding the text. Hence the text is always recontextualized so that we can show the relevance of the text to the present day society. In any hermeneutical discourse, a text gains its meaning in and through distance. "Distanciation," says Ricoeur, "is a constitutive phenomenon of the text as written." A text, according to him, is much more than a particular case of interhuman communication; it is the paradigm of the distanciation in all communication. Thus it reveals a fundamental character of the historicity of human experience, communication within which takes place by means of distance. Writing

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makes the text autonomous in relation to the author. A text transcends the psycho-sociological conditions of production and opens itself to an unlimited series of readings. Ricoeur makes a distinction between a situational reference to an actual world (*Umwelt*) and a non-situational reference to a symbolic world (*Welt*). He says: "It is this enlarging of the *Umwelt* into the *Welt* which permits us to speak of the references *opened up* by the text." Though the *Tirukkural* is distanced by time, there exists an inseparable relation between the text and the present time. The distance between the text and the reader has to be bridged by decontextualizing the text. There are two types of texts, according to M. Varadarajan. The first one takes the text to its time whereas the second comes to our time and helps us. Further, he says that there are two ways of understanding the text. The first one forgets the present time, and takes us back to the period in which the text was written. The second one looks into the period when the text was written, and then comes to our period and guides us. Tiruvalluvar, according to Varadarajan, belongs to the second category.

Hermeneutics bridges the past, present, and the future. Thus both tradition and modernity are intermingled in hermeneutics. The *Tirukkural* is a synthesis of tradition and modernity. Tradition consists in the finite unfolding of the infinite content, a history of finite actualization of an essentially inexhaustible, or infinite truth. As Gadamer says: tradition is an "inescapable facticity". Every re-telling of it is a renewal of the tradition. Our belongingness to tradition is our primordial ontological condition. Tradition is the locus of under-standing. We are shaped by our past in various ways, and this has a tremendous influence on our understanding. As a great champion of the Tamil tradition, Tiruvalluvar shows the uniqueness of the Tamils by not only accepting the past, but by showing his willingness to accept the present as well as the future. This made the author of the *Manonmaniyam*, Sundaram Pillai, sing that the Tamil language is ever young and beautiful. The *Tirukkural*, which was written two

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thousand years ago, not only upholds the tradition of the past, but is ready to accept the modernity also. Tradition always allows change.

Who is a man? Is he a mere psycho-physical organism or is he just a physical entity? A distinction between a "person" and a "biological human being" is maintained in the philosophical discourse. John Locke, for example, defines a person as "a thinking, intelligent being that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places." The idea of personhood is important in ethical discourse also. The moralists hold the view that persons have a special value and that they deserve moral respect. Since a person is different from a biological being, "being human", i.e. being a member of the *homo sapiens*, does not automatically qualify one for the special kind of moral respect due to persons. According to Kant, persons are primarily characterized by their rationality, and so they have dignity, an intrinsic value, which makes them valuable.

Tiruvalluvar uses the term "*sanror*" to signify a person who possesses great virtues. He is not concerned with a man endowed with mind and body alone; his concept of a person is different from an ordinary human being. The person whom he recognizes as an ideal man is endowed with five noble qualities, viz. love (*anbu*), sensitivity (*nan*), altruism (*oppuravu*), compassion (*kanootam*), and truthfulness (*vaymai*). These are the five pillars of excellence (983). In the chapter on "Nobility" (Sanranmai), Tiruvalluvar enunciates that, if the great fail in nobility, the earth will bear us no more. The question here is: would men of character fail in their nobility? This is not possible at all, for they never lack the five noble qualities. Thus Tiruvalluvar is sure that this will not happen under any circumstances. When he raises the rhetorical question, "If the great fail in their nobility?" the implication is that they will not fail at all. This could be understood from his answer to the question, "What is the touchstone of nobility?" He says that accepting one's defeat even

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from the inferiors is an expression of nobility. Even though the nobles possess the capacity to win over the inferiors and the unequals, the former accept defeat by not fighting with the inferiors. By doing so, their nobility increases. Elaborating further, the author contends that, even when everything is lop-sided, the nobles will not deviate from their nature; even if the sea erodes the shore and enters into the land, the nobles will not deviate from their nobility. During tsunami we have seen the sea entering into the land by breaking its shore. Tiruvalluvar would say that even then the nobles will not give up their virtues.

In the *Tirukkural*, the chapter on "Solvanmai" deals with the power of good speech. Tiruvalluvar believes that the words which we utter may bring good or bad. Words change the situation; they can change persons also. In short, one must know how to impress others by words. For this, one needs the competence. This is what we call "linguistic competence" and "communicative competence" in the Chomskian and the Habermasian terminologies, respectively. The condition under which the force of better argument alone would prevail is made possible, according to Habermas, by the theory of communicative competence. Habermas holds that there are four conditions to be fulfilled in a discourse: (1) intelligibility of the utterance, (2) the truth of the propositional content, (3) the correctness of the performatory component, and (4) the sincerity of the speaking subject. If all these conditions are satisfied, then communication is not only complete, but also unproblematic. Now let us look at Tiruvalluvar who says (650): "Men who do not know how to communicate to others about what they have learnt are like flowers which cannot give fragrance after they blossom." According to him, when we talk, we should use the words in such a way that they cannot be conquered by other words, and also we have to use the best words so that we can convey the ideas clearly. When Tiruvalluvar propounds the use of proper words, his objective is that, though there are different words to convey the same meaning, it is always good to use

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proper words. We may call this "word-management". In the Indian philosophical tradition, the Mimamsakas say that each word has the potency in it. Such is the power of words. Tiruvalluvar shows the importance of using proper words relevant to the context. Otherwise, what we want to convey may not be conveyed. Though this is a positive side of how to use proper words, there is also the negative side of using improper words. He contends that a person who articulates useless words is not a human being, but chaff among men.

Emphasizing the relation between ethics and politics, Tiruvalluvar declares that there cannot be any polity without the practice of virtue. In the ancient Chinese tradition, it was Confucius who, in *The Doctrine of Mean*, explains the relation between virtue and politics. He talks about the responsibilities (i) between the king and the ministers, (ii) between parents and children, and (iii) teacher and students, keeping the common good at the back-drop like Tiruvalluvar. Moral rules are forever universal in character according to Tiruvalluvar. The categorical imperative of Kant also supports the view that all moral rules are universalizable. "So act as if the maxim of your action were to become a law universal," declares Kant. For him, an act is said to be immoral if it cannot be brought under a rule for all human beings. Further, he says that no human being should be thought of or used merely as a means for someone else's end, but also as an end in himself. But Kant failed to make a distinction between an exception to a rule and a qualifying rule, thus permitting no exception to his moral imperative.

Tiruvalluvar emphasizes the need for the ruler to protect his subjects by attending to their basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing. It means that a king must be gracious towards his subjects. People who live under a graceless king suffer like the earth unvisited by drops of rain. If people starve for their livelihood, then there is no economic justice. Tiruvalluvar

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considers poverty as an evil. For him, poverty is painful, and it makes impossible the present and the future bliss. Tiruvalluvar here explains the severity of poverty and the pain it causes. He narrates the pangs of pain which poverty inflicts on one as follows: "It is possible to sleep in fire, but it is impossible to get even a wink of sleep in the midst of poverty." When one reads the following couplet (1048), the eyes become wet. A person afflicted by poverty says: "Oh! How I dread it! Will that poverty that almost killed me yesterday, assail me today too?" Tiruvalluvar 's understanding of poverty as well as his concern for the poor is depicted in a simple, but an effective manner. Perhaps, he was aware of the fact that the gap and the disparity between the fortunate and the unfortunate, inevitably lead to disturbance, tension, conflicts and violence, and other social problems.

Modern political ideas such as justice, liberty, government, etc. began with the reflection of Greek thinkers on the institutions of the city-state. But the meaning of such terms has been modified in such a way that it has to be understood in the light of the institutions by which the ideals have to be realized. Though the Greek city-state was different from the political institutions in which modern men live, the impact of it on modern state is quite impressive. We can always find some parallels between the functioning of the ancient city-state and that of the modern state, and we can learn from the ancient political concepts. The same thing is applicable to the *Tirukkural* which speaks about the ancient concept of state, and it helps us to understand the modern concept of state. According to C.E.M. Joad, the concept of state is important for two main reasons: (1) The good life for the individual can be realized only in a state, and (2) the best state is one whose excellence consists in making it possible for all its citizens to live the best kind of life. There is the need for proper understanding of both the state and the individual, ensuring peace and harmony.

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The great age of political philosophy came after the downfall of Athens in her struggle with Sparta. Political philosophy in Greece started during the fifth century B.C. For example, Herodotus discusses the relative merits of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. According to Tiruvalluvar 's notion of polity, the people are not mere subjects to be ruled, but citizens who participate in the political powers and responsibilities. In his concept of polity, both wealth (porul) and love (inbam) follow from virtuous life (aram). The word "porul" means "value", "meaning", "wealth", etc. During Tiruvalluvar 's time, economics was not a separate discipline; politics itself was inclusive of economics. Hence his discussion on polity covers "political economy". The first prerequisite for polity is that it should be based on virtuous life. The polity discussed in the *Tirukkural* pertains to the king and his rule, which is monarchial in nature. Because of this, one may think that what Tiruvalluvar has said is applicable only to a monarchial rule; but it is true of other forms of government as well. Whether it is monarchy or democracy, there are some basic principles which are common to both.

In contemporary politics, two models of state are suggested. The first is the social contract model of the Lockean pattern. For Locke, people enter into an agreement or contract with each other and also with the government. It is expected that the state would protect individuals from interference by other individuals. Political authority must be grounded in the consent of the governed. The social contact theory, while explaining the purpose of the state, also gives scope for morality. Morality here means a set of rules to regulate social relations amongst basically self-interested individuals. The other model is the social warfare model, where a group or groups seize power and establish themselves as dominant in a society. Antonio Gramsci, for example, points out how states and state institutions work to win popular consent for their authority through a variety of processes, which disguise their position

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of dominance. Political dominance enforced by the political authority, i.e. state, will bring only a disharmony between the government and the people. Tiruvalluvar does not face a problem like this, because he believes in the harmony between the ruler and the ruled. This harmony is important for the smooth functioning of any state. This is nothing but the social contract that a ruler and the ruled must enter into. He observes (740): "All excellences are vain where the ruler and the ruled disagree." It means that, though a country possesses all the excellent things, it cannot achieve its goal, if it does not possess a capable and good king.

The ancient Greeks have made a distinction between *physis* (nature) and *nomos* (law, custom). Aristotle makes use of this distinction when he contrasts natural and legal justice. He had a theory of natural rights that serves as the basis for the recognition of rights. Though Indian systems do not develop such a conception regarding natural rights, it is obvious that they have no quarrel with the view that all human beings have a natural right to be treated in certain ways and that they possess this right both within the political and pre-political conditions. Justice, according to John Rawls, is the first virtue of social institutions. In his *Theory of Justice*, he defines the concept of justice in the following way: Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory, however elegant and economical, must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions, no matter how efficient and well-arranged, must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. According supremacy to justice, Tiruvalluvar considers it as the first of all social institutions. His concept of justice can be viewed from four perspectives: (1) social, (2) economical, (3) political, and (4) gender. Let us see how Tiruvalluvar looks at these issues which have a bearing on human society.

A country should promote social justice, equality, and integration to ensure the participation of all in democracy. There

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should be socio-economic and political equality and justice among all. Our Indian Constitution ensures all its citizens equality, fraternity, and justice. Political and economic justice has no meaning apart from social equality. Tiruvalluvar believes in the principle of social justice, and hence talks about the equality of all men. "By birth, all men are equal and it is by the difference in the action that their worth is rendered unequal" (972). What he means is that on the basis of birth, one cannot make the discrimination as higher and lower. The social stratification based on caste and community has no meaning in the ancient Tamil tradition. Tiruvalluvar's principle of social justice implies that equal opportunities must be given to all. It is necessary to democratize the knowledge-system, wealth, rights, and freedom. Justice is often identified with equality and is necessary for the existence and prosperity of a country. Tiruvalluvar did not believe in the government of plutocracy wherein the power resides in the hands of men whose main concern is wealth. Plutocracy breaks the society on the basis of the rich and the poor. In the present context of socio-economic equality and justice, Tiruvalluvar is relevant because his text speaks about the equality of all. The society, which is unequal on the basis of haves and have-nots, higher and lower, needs his philosophy for its emancipation. He envisaged a casteless society, but now caste has become a part and parcel of life in reality. It predominates the political, social, spiritual, and religious ways of life. The ancient Tamil society did not have this bitter experience of caste. This social evil has entered into the Tamil society during the later period. When Tiruvalluvar says that all are equal by birth, he means that there cannot be any hierarchy among people in the name of caste, colour or creed.

In the chapters on "Unswerving sceptre" and "Misrule", Tiruvalluvar deals with the concept of justice in detail. The administration of justice is the primary duty of the government. Hence both these chapters, included under "Porutpal", examine the role and functions of the government. Tiruvalluvar was not

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familiar with the parliamentary democratic form of government. But what he has said about the king and his rule can be viewed from the standpoint of the democratic government of the present day. He believes that the king who rules cherishing his people has the world at his feet (544). The people, according to Tiruvalluvar, look at the sceptre for their existence. People's welfare is the key principle in the democratic form of government. This means that political justice is meaningful if the welfare and the rights of the people are protected by the king or the government. Tiruvalluvar views that the unrighteous king who oppresses his subjects is more cruel than the one who leads the life of a murderer. Thus he makes it clear that proper political justice will be rendered by the rulers only if they take into account the welfare of the people so that there will be peace and prosperity among the members of the society. The Constitution of India has issued two broad mandates to the Parliament, the Legislatures of the States, and to all institutions of the government. They are: (1) not to take away or abridge certain rights described as fundamental and (2) to follow the Directive Principles of State Policy as formulated by it. The social and economic obligations of the state are to protect the rights of the citizens. The ancient text, *Artha-sastra*, says: "The king shall provide the orphan, the dying, the infirm, the afflicted, and the helpless with maintenance; he shall also provide subsistence to the helpless expectant mothers and also the children they give birth to." Tiruvalluvar also says that the king protects the land and that justice protects him, if unfailingly administered (547). Thus he makes a covenant between the king and the law.

The basis of social justice lies in the principle of equality in birth, according to Tiruvalluvar. There may be some differences in the duties performed by the individuals, because people perform different types of duties according to their status, ability, and skill. He also accepts this; but with regard to birth, all are equal. It is the duty of the government to render social justice

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considering the fact that all are equal by birth. It can do this by formulating the proper law so that all can be treated as equal. Equality and justice imply rights. Brian Barry in his *Why Social Justice Matters* proposed that social justice requires equal distribution unless inequality arises by voluntary choice from an initial situation in which everyone had equal opportunities. In a society where there are no equal opportunities, social justice is nothing but a myth. Rawls' view of "justice as fairness" is meaningful here. There cannot be any equality among the members of the society if rights are denied to some. This means that social justice and human rights are interrelated. Rights should be considered natural to all human beings, because they are born with some rights, and equality among men is one such natural right. The 1776 American Declaration of Independence recognized rights as follows: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with some inalienable rights, that among these [are] life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The French revolutionaries also declared that men are born and remain free and equal in rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that, whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human right should be protected by the rule of law. All men and women are entitled to the rights and freedom contained in the Declaration without any discrimination. The human rights may be divided into two categories: the first one is civil and political rights, which are usually insisted upon in the Western liberal democracies; and the second one is economic, social, and cultural rights, which are generally emphasized in the socialist democracies. The civil and political rights include the right to life, freedom from slavery, freedom from torture, freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile, right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty, the right to marry and to form a family, freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and so on.

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The economic justice means that the ruler or the government must fulfil the basic needs of each and every individual. Amartya Sen maintains that the economic justice will be meaningful in a society only when equal opportunities are available to all. He points out that a child who is denied the opportunity of elementary school is not only deprived as a youngster, but also handicapped all through life. Article 39 of the Indian Constitution says: "The state shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood." A state that takes care of its citizens is a "welfare state". According to Amartya Sen, there is no conflict between political freedom and economic performance. We have to see the impact of democracy and the political freedom on the lives and capabilities of the citizens. This means that political freedom in the form of democracy helps to safeguard economic freedom to survive.

The state is an instrument of social, economic, and political justice. It is a protector and promoter of all these. Political justice implies that the people of the country should participate in the government, and human beings have the right to participate in the government. People's participation in the government is essential to democracy. If we believe that some are high and some are low, then democracy is meaningless. B.R. Ambedkar says that the constitutional ideal cannot "be attained with mere political democracy; we must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Social democracy means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality, and fraternity as principles of life."

Tiruvalluvar's concern for equality among all implies equality among men and women too. The morals which he had prescribed are applicable for both men and women. He explains the beauty of the family life in as many as twenty chapters. He shows how the domestic life is superior to all other kinds of life. Domestic life becomes complete with the help of the spouse. When Tiruvalluvar delineates the emergence of love and virtue

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as the result of domestic life, he claims that, without the help of one's spouse, one cannot practise any virtue. Though during his time the four *asramas* were prevalent, he considers that among them the domestic life is the most sacred one. He maintains (45) that "stage of a house-holder" can be defined only in terms of women, for it is a righteous life which one leads with one's spouse: "Love and virtue are the flower and fruit of domestic life." In the domestic life, one's wife is not only the companion, but also the leader of the house; for she supports her husband in all his ups and downs. In other words, she is the axis of a family life. Raising the question, "What can excel a woman?" he answers that there is no one who can excel woman, for she not only guards herself and her husband, but also her tradition. Treating both men and women on a par with each other, he declares: "The eyes for all living beings are the letters and numbers." So, he enunciates that education is common to both men and women, since the term "all living beings" includes both men and women.

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Syncretic Theatre: A Contemporary Indian Phenomenon

16

V Sivaraman

The shift of emphasis from text to performance in contemporary drama criticism has provided the scope for researchers to foreground the socio-political implications of techniques employed by playwrights. The analysis of such implications of dramatic techniques acquires importance and relevance in the post-colonial context, which insists on the cultural independence of the author in the use of both form and content. Though attempts have been made in the past by critics to analyze the works of art on these lines, they have very often been done in such genres as poetry and fiction. Very rarely have such analyses focused on the works of performative art. In fact, it is only in performative arts such as dance and film that the socio-political implications of form and content acquire greater significance, since they demonstrate the fluid nature of every contemporary phenomenon.

The notion of the nation is one such contemporary phenomenon which theatre often foregrounds. History has made it clear that theatre has often been used by the colonizer as a medium of enslavement in the colonial era and by the colonized as a means of empowerment in the post-colonial era. However, the direct application of the dichotomy between the colonizer

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and the colonized to the inherently pluralistic cultural forms of India is meaningless, since what is politically established as the Indian nation is not in consonance with a pluralistic setup. Indeed, the establishment of India as a nation is the contribution of Orientalists. Therefore, what is actually projected as Indian culture does not include various regional cultures, which are also equally Indian.

Unlike the Western / European theatre, which could use drama since the time of Shakespeare to make the people/ audience become conscious of their nationhood, Indian theatre could not make it clear to the audience what is precisely Indian. This is due to pluralism that prevails in language, culture and politics. In fact, till the arrival of the British, India had not been politically established as a 'nation'. Even in the pre-colonial period theatre had remained exclusive to an elite group of people who knew Sanskrit. The people who did not know Sanskrit could not have direct access to the fully established, sophisticated theatre. Simultaneously, a popular/folk theatrical tradition, which made use of the oral narratives from the two epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabbharata,* also existed. Due to these factors, the task of defining Indian theatre still remains difficult, if not impossible: "there is supposedly no Indian theatre because there is no single theatrical concept in India, and there is no single linguistic entity that all Indians can understand" (Dharwadker 2006: 22).

The difficulty involved in defining Indian theatre, which requires a historical study of Indian theatre spanning three millennia, is that it is hard to define the essential quality of Indianness. The most prominent of the critics who have defined such Indianness include Adya Rangacharya, Nemichandra Jain, M. L. Varapande and Sunil Subhedar. In their attempt to define Indian theatre, all these critics have pointed out that there is a clear point of linkage between the earlier sources and the subsequent developments in the field.

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Despite the incompatibility of these two groups of critics in defining Indian theatre, one cannot glibly state that Indian theatre still remains an unresolved puzzle. Indeed, it is this incompatibility of these two positions that signals various problems which acquire significance in the post-independence Indian context which is essentially post-colonial. In this connection, Rustom Bharucha's comment acquires significance: "Perhaps, the problem is not whether the Indian theatre is sufficiently 'Indian' but whether it is true to the complex dynamics of a post-colonial society, where the very construction of 'India' is being questioned at diverse levels" (Barucha 2000: 41).

In order to acquire adequate understanding of the complex dynamics of the post-colonial Indian society to which contemporary Indian drama appeals, one has to explain, in clear-cut terms, the difference between the pre-and the post-Independence phases of Indian drama. The first phase of modern Indian theatre, which begins with the arrival of the British at the beginning of the nineteenth century and continues up to the 1940's, is not truly 'Indian' to many of the theorists as well as practitioners of post-independence Indian drama. The revival of Sanskrit plays in both English and other Indian regional languages, according to them, is on the lines of 'Orientalism'. In fact, such orientalist practices in modern Indian drama had weaned the native dramatists away from their own pre-colonial regional theatrical tradition to such an extent that they allowed themselves to be influenced by the Western mode of producing realistic plays on proscenium models. In consequence, modern Indian drama in its first phase failed to revive such native traits of Indian theatrical tradition as stylization / non-naturalistic modes and drama as performance text. The attempts of some great dramatists like Tagore and Aurobindo to revive Indian theatrical tradition was confined to Indianness in themes. They never succeeded in re-establishing the indigenous forms of both classical and folk theatres of India. Instead, Indian themes were

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presented on proscenium stage in a realistic mode. Bemoaning such a trend in the colonial era, Suresh Awasthi, one of the advocates of the theatre of roots, says:

> In the very first phase of modern theatre in mid-nineteenth century, our interest was awakened in the classics, and *Shakuntala* was produced in translation or adaptation in most of the major Indian languages. This interest in the classics, however, was not inspired by a search for roots, or a creative urge. It was more a matter of orientalism in reverse gear (Awasthi 2009: 305)

Therefore, despite the presence of pre-colonial themes and the revival of Sanskrit plays in translation, the first phase of modern Indian drama does not lend itself to be called truly 'Indian'.

Unlike in its first phase, in the second phase of modern Indian drama, Indian theatre practitioners have made several significant attempts at reclaiming the pre-colonial past of Indian theatre in terms of its form. It is their attention to the form of pre-colonial theatre that has made them decolonize the colonial notion of drama as a mere text. Besides, the focus on form, which is the result of the encounter with traditional Indian theatre, has made them realize drama as performance. Commenting on this qualitative shift from content to form, Suresh Awasthi in his pioneering essay in "Defense of the 'theatre of roots'" published in *Modern Indian Theatre* says:

> Having practiced realistic non-stylized theatre for over a century, we seem to forget that the Indian theatrical tradition, both in theory and practice, has been greatly concerned with the whole range of form in theatre. But form which is integral to the content, not imposed upon it; form that is primarily concerned with the art of the actor, form which illuminates the dramatic text and helps in transforming it into a performance text of plastic, visual images (Awasthi 2009: 301).

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Furthermore, the shift in emphasis from content to form that Awasthi has pointed out also highlights the reduction in the number of verbal signs (dialogue) to maximize the number of staging signs as another point of difference between the realistic and non-realistic modes of modern Indian drama. However, this does not mean that the performance text, which the stylized theatre insists on, totally negates the notion of text ensconced in its dialogue. Rather, it only signals the primacy of performance over text in drama.

The understanding of drama as performance text has made drama critics analyze and appreciate the roles of actor, director and the playwright in the success of a play. It has also proved that various meanings of the text, which would otherwise remain hidden in its print version, can be made clear to the audience in most concrete terms. The popularity that directors and actors enjoy along with the playwright in recent times indicates the importance as well as uniqueness of each production/ performance. In every production/performance, the director exploits the potential of the script and the actors so as to make them decode aesthetics of drama discussed in such ancient texts as *Natyashastra.*

The notion of drama as performance text has also led to the production of Sanskrit plays by such directors as B. V.Karanth, K. N. Panikkar and Ratan Thiyam in their own regional languages. The production of Sanskrit plays like *Malavikagnimitram*, *Madhyamavyayoga*, *Karnabharam* and *Chakravyuha* by these directors not only made the transformation of poetic images into visual images possible but also explored the possibilities of synthesizing the politically irreconcilable forms of classical and folk theatres of India. It is the synthesis of these two forms of theatre in their production that has given rise to what Christopher Balme calls "syncretic theatre" (2009: 345). This theatre genre which is parallel to the post-colonial condition of 'hybridity' gives what Suresh Awsathi (2009: 295)

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calls a "Pan-Indian character" to modern Indian theatre. This pan-Indian character is further explained and modified by G. P. Deshpande in his article *History, Politics and the Modern Playwright*:

> When we speak of national theatre we do so with almost no knowledge of the various Indian theatres. Part of the reason for this ignorance could very well be the attitude or tendency to treat these concrete theatre traditions as "regional" or *pradeshika* against an abstraction of national or Indian theatre. It must be emphasized that this polarity is neither realistic nor useful in terms of our theatres... it is essential for our self-understanding that the unity of Indian cultural expression is achieved through the plurality of linguistic (in this case theatrical) expressions. For that reason the terminology of "regional" is misleading when it comes to cultural production. Each mode is uniquely Indian. In that sense there is no regional theatre in India. There are several, equally valid and legitimate Indian theatres (Deshpande 2000: 95).

G. P. Despande's assertion of all regional theatres as equally Indian erases the dichotomy between regional and national theatres and makes it clear that the regeneration of provincial theatre is a precondition for the emergence of a national theatre. It also reiterates the importance of plurality, which distinguishes the pluralistic context of contemporary Indian theatre from all the other mono-lingual contexts of its Western counterpart. Further, the erasure of the conflict between regional and national theatres also gives scope for researchers to discover certain commonalties among various regional theatres. This shows that in post-independence India, the quest is not so much for a national theatre as for a significant theatre "in and of the nation, linked intra-nationally by complex commonalities and mutual self-differentiations" (Dharwadker 2006: 24). Bharucha too suggests the same idea in his article "We Need a House of Our

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Own: The Impasse of Indian Theatre after Independence" when he says: "to overcome the creative and critical impasse in which theatre currently finds itself, what needs to be invented is a renewed imaginary of the Indian theatre, not as a metaphysical essence but as a network of interactive possibilities" (2000: 38). Therefore, the canon of Indian theatre can be discussed only in terms of the complex commonalties among various regional theatres, with the result that one can talk only in terms of Indian theatres.

It is in the light of these Indian theatres that the concept of syncretic theatre can be discussed. By making use of various features such as dance, half-curtains, music, along with speech (*vachika*) and gestures (*angika*), the syncretic theatre has shifted the emphasis of Indian drama from text to performance. This shift of emphasis has forced theatre critics to analyze plays in the light of theatricality. Such analyses of plays have thrown light not only on the generic but also on the social aspects of theatricality.

English plays written by Indian dramatists, like other regional plays, belong to the genre of 'syncretic theatre', especially because many of these are translated from regional languages. Being products of syncretic theatre, most Indian English plays distinguish themselves from their regional versions of performance in terms of their theatricality. One such distinction lies in the use of the English language whose target audience belongs to the urban setup. Though very many critics have already analyzed the Indianness of the English language used by the writers, very few have highlighted its relevance to the production and the reception of performative arts. Critics like Raja Rao have discussed such issues with the genre of fiction in mind. Even historians of Indian writing in English have merely hinted at the incompatibility between English plays and Indian theatre-going public as the reason for the poor response of Indo-Anglian drama. Therefore, the incompatibility between the

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English plays and the Indian audience (primarily urban) adds not only a linguistic but also a social dimension to the theatricality of syncretic performance.

Unlike English plays of the pre-independence era, which are imitative in form, English plays of the post-independence era make use of indigenous forms for their performance text. This problematizes the discussion of Indo-Anglian drama of the post-independence era in the post-colonial context. The problem arises due to the relationship between the playwrights and the audience. In fact, the playwrights use the colonizer's language in the theatre of the colonized. This incompatible relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is peculiar to the syncretic performance of Indian English plays. The playwright's response, either conscious or unconscious, to this peculiar situation adds to the self-reflexive aspect of those Indo-Anglian plays which make use of indigenous performance traditions. Such English plays acquire the status of what Christopher Balme calls "transcreated drama" (2009: 345) in his article "Indian Drama in English: Transcreation and the Indigenous Performance Tradition". This process of transcreation provides scope for a new critical discourse in post-colonial studies. Linking this process with the second phase of Indo-Anglian drama, Balme says further: "It is only through the process of transcreation that a form of syncretic drama and theater is realized that combines the English language with indigenous performance codes" (2009: 345). It is interesting that Balme illustrates his concept of syncretic theatre with Girish Karnad's play, *Hayavadana* in the same article. Many of the English plays which make use of myths and legends for their performance employ the techniques of both classical and folk forms of Indian theatre. Therefore, playwrights of such plays can very well be categorized as practitioners of syncretic theatre.

The urge to practise indigenous modes of performance, which the practitioners of syncretic theatre have exhibited in

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their plays, can be historically traced to the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), formally launched as a theatre movement in 1942 with the objective of using folk forms of theatre as a vehicle to address the issues of the rural, social, economic injustice in the life of the Indian rural people. However, in their practice of the indigenous modes of performance, the exponents of syncretic theatre differ from the playwrights of the IPTA movement by not showing themselves as radical revisionists. Still, the contribution of the IPTA movement to the evolution of syncretic performance tradition cannot be overlooked. Besides, the response to the notion of all regional theatres as equally Indian by the playwrights of syncretic theatre is yet another tendency associated with the IPTA. Again, while adhering to this tendency too, the practitioners of syncretic theatre distinguish themselves by incorporating classical as well as Western modes of performance into theirs.

Just as the syncretic theatre combines the classical and the folk traditions, it also combines the folk and the urban settings in both production and reception. The combination of these two apparent incompatibilities has given rise to a new genre viz, 'Urban Folk Drama'. This urban folk drama does not result from the mechanical combination of rural subject matter and the urban proscenium model of theatre. It actually involves "the complex and decidedly "modern" theatrical means by which the matter of village life is transported to, and performed in, the city" (Dharwadker 2006: 320). This genre also differs from actual folk theatre in three different ways: first, unlike actual folk theatre, which is characterized by anonymity, urban folk theatre involves individual authorship; second, urban folk theatre enjoys the twin media of print and performance, whereas actual folk theatre is solely performance oriented; third, while actual folk drama belongs to the specific region, language, and ecological cycle of the participating community, urban folk drama is a transportable entity, since it can be detached from all these particularities and performed in the original language or in translation anywhere an audience is

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available. The dramatists who have practiced the urban folk drama in the post-independence era include: Chandrasekhar Kambar, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, K. N. Panikkar, Ratan Thiyam and Habib Tanvir. Some of their plays like *Jokumaraswamy*, *Hayavadana*, *Nagamandala*, *Ghasiram Kotwal*, *Chakravyuha*, and *Charandas Chor* can be cited as typical examples of urban folk drama. Highlighting the playwright's role in practising urban folk drama, Dharwadker says :

> The incompatibility between rural subject matter and the urban sites of performance therefore places a great deal of responsibility on the playwright or director, who must renegotiate every feature of folk theatre – form, content, style, language, and staging conventions – to ensure its success in nonfolk locations (2006: 322).

Another striking feature of urban folk drama lies in its adaptation of ancient myths and rituals to urban performance. However, while adapting myths and rituals, the urban folk theatre faces certain problems such as the creation of an unbridgeable gap between urban and rural spheres of experience and the incompatibility between its form and content. These two issues lead in turn to the estrangement between spectacle and the spectator. Mohit Chattopadhyay acknowledges this problem posed by estrangement, when he says:

> It is an estrangement between me in this city and the rituals which are still being observed in some tribal area. In the past, there were links between the city and the village, there were common areas of communication. Today, when we adopt a theme or a technique from, say, Western Europe, or from a tribal area in our country, although the latter may seem to be geographically nearer, in our experiences both can be equidistant (*Contemporary Indian Theatre* 31).

While analyzing the same problem from a social perspective, Rustom Bharucha says: "In the absence of sustained interactions

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between urban and rural theatre workers at intra/inter-regional levels, the dichotomies of development remain as stark as ever, with the city continuing to live off the human and ecological resources of rural communities" (2000: 41). Extending the problem posed by the incongruity of this genre, Safdar Hashmi observes that with the use of traditional forms in urban folk theatre arises the content that the new genre tries to break with: "If you work with the traditional form, along comes the traditional content with its superstition, backwardness, obscurantism, and its promotion of feudal structures" (Quoted in Erven 1988: 141).

Closely associated with the social implication of the problem posed by the incongruity of urban folk drama to its reception is the generic implication of the problem posed by the same to the production of urban folk theatre. When the urban practitioners of this genre employ myth and ritual with contemporary overtones, they try to create what Dharwadker calls "an exemplary syncresis" (2006: 327) which makes the form of their works highly complex. This complexity is discernible in their dramatic composition as well as theatrical representation. The playwrights of this genre respond to this complexity in most concrete terms within the frame of their works. Such plays as Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*, *Nagamandala*, and *The Fire and the Rain*, Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghasiram Kotwal*, Chandrasekhar Kambar's *Jokumarasamy*, Tanvir's *Charandas Chor* are some of the notable examples of this urban folk drama produced in the post-independence phase that have received enthusiastic reception from the theatre-going public. In short, besides being successful as a genuine expression of the contemporary social problems, the urban folk drama lends itself to be treated as another manifestation of syncretic theatre.

In an attempt to exemplify the product of urban folk drama within the process of syncretic theatre, the present paper takes up Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* for analysis.

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The Fire and the Rain is based on an obscure myth of Yavakri(ta) which Karnad had come across while reading C. Rajagopalachari's prose retelling of the *Mahabharata*. The obscure myth of Yavakri(ta) which occurs in Chapters 135-38 of Vana Parva (Forest Canto) in Rajaji's *Mahabharata* is narrated by the sage Lomasha to Pandavas in their exile. The account of the myth of Yavakri(ta) given in four chapters by Rajaji influenced Karnad so much that, immediately after reading it, he decided to turn it into a play. He constantly meditated on the myth of Yavakri(ta) with this purpose. The three distinct layers of the present play – the prologue, the play proper in three acts and the epilogue – provide readers/audience with the insight into the myths of Drama as Sacrifice, Arvasu and Paravasu in *Mahabharata* and the slaying of the demon Vritra by the King of Gods, Indra in the Rig Veda. The re-enactment of these three interlinked myths in *The Fire and the Rain* is central to the analysis of the present play as an epitome of syncretic theatre in general and urban folk drama in particular.

The syncretic process in the performance text of *The Fire and the Rain* begins with the Actor Manager, a non-brahmin, expressing the classical notion of drama as ritual/sacrifice in the prologue. The seven-year long fire sacrifice that the King conducts to propitiate Indra, the God of Rain, is what marks the beginning of the present play within which the Actor-Manager's play *The Triumph of Lord Indra* is performed. The story of Arvasu and Paravasu which is performed as the play-proper actually takes off as another layer of performance from the Actor-Manager's play *The Triumph of Lord Indra*. The presence of the two plays namely, the tale of Paravasu and Arvasu and *The Triumph of Lord Indra* within the seven-year long fire sacrifice (*yajna*) draws the attention of researchers to place the performance/text of *The Fire and the Rain* in the larger context of classical Indian drama where drama is treated as sacrifice (*yajna*). In fact, Girish Karnad's note on '*Yajna* and Theatre' in the Afterword of the present play provides enough evidence as well as scope for the researchers to

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interpret *The Fire and the Rain* as Karnad's earnest attempt to reclaim the pre-colonial version of Indian dramatic tradition.

The parallels between drama and sacrifice in the passage quoted below from Karnad's note on *Yajna* and Theatre substantiate this interpretation,

> The fire sacrifice was a rite of such central importance in the Vedic society and so completely dominated the mode of thinking that it became the central metaphor, used to underline the importance of any activity. Thus the Yajna metaphor has been employed while talking of academic study, love-making, the epics, marriage, indeed of life itself. One need hardly mention then that it is also a favourite metaphor for theatre...the parallel is striking in so far as both activities involve human performances, precise gestures, speech, and a carefully worked out action leading to a pre-determined denouement (Karnad 2005: 293)

The incorporation of the parallel between drama and sacrifice into the speech that the Actor-Manager gives in support of his proposed play to Paravasu, the chief priest can be treated as the dramatized manifesto of syncretic theatre:

> Sirs, as is well known to you, Brahma, the Lord of all creation extracted the requisite elements from the four Vedas and combined them into a fifth veda and thus gave birth to the art of drama. He handed it over to his son, Lord Indra, the God of the skies. Lord Indra, in turn, passed on the art to Bharata, a human being, for the gods cannot indulge in pretence. So if Indra is to be pleased and bring to an end this long drought which ravages our land, a fire sacrifice is not enough. A play has to be performed along with it. If we offer him entertainment in addition to the oblations, the god may grant us the rains we're praying for (ibid: 107)

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Implicit in the Actor-Manager's speech is the playwright's attempt at subverting the belief that the performance of *Yajna* (the fire sacrifice) will put an end to drought. In fact, the Actor-Manager's assertion that the fire sacrifice alone is not enough and a play has to be performed along with it is suggestive of the inevitable marriage of classical and folk forms of theatre for the formation of the canon called Indian theatre after Independence. The socio-political implication of the fusion of these two forms of theatre is that India can never be claimed as a nation of any single class, caste, or religion.

The portrayal of Nittilai, a tribal girl, as the central character in the tale of Arvasu and Paravasu lends itself to be interpreted as Karnad's conscious attempt to dramatize the syncretic process in the present play. This is so because Nittilai, who does not figure in the actual myth of Yavakri(ta) that Karnad had borrowed for the present play, does not merely present herself as the passionate lover of Arvasu. Instead, she shows herself as the rational critique of the much hailed spiritual practices of Brahmins. Nittilai's questions about the eternal knowledge of Yavakri(ta) and the secrecy of the spiritual practice of Brahmins make this clear: "Why are the Brahmins so secretive about everything? [..] I want to ask Yavakri two questions. Can he tell when he is going to die?...just two. What is the point of any knowledge, if you can't save dying children and if you can't predict your moment of death" (ibid: 117). What is even more significant is that in her conversation with Arvasu, Nittilai does not talk so much of her love for Arvasu as of the unbridgeable gap between the Brahmins and the hunters. She even goes on to castigate Brahmin men when she says: "These high-caste men are glad enough to bed our women but not to wed them" (ibid: 114).

More than the thematic significance of Nittilai's razor-sharp en thrust of the Brahmins, it is the dramatic implication of the same that draws the attention of drama critics. Indeed, the difference that Nittilai points out between the spiritual practice

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of Brahmins and that of hunters in the passage quoted below can be described as a concrete statement on the contrast between classical and folk forms of theatre in terms of the locale:

You know, their fire sacrifices are conducted in covered enclosures. They mortify themselves in the dark of the jungle. Even their gods appear so secretly. Why? What are they afraid of? Look at my people. Everything is done in public view there. The priest announces that he'll invoke the deity at such a time on such and such a day. And then there, right in front of the whole tribe, he gets possessed. And the spirit answers your questions. You can feel it come and go. You know it's there (ibid: 116)

When viewed from the point of theatricality, these words may be understood as indirectly pointing to the open-air production of the folk performance and the classical/urban performance in covered enclosure.

Inherent in Nittilai's dour indictment of the spiritual practice of Brahmins is the playwright's programmatic as well as conscious strategy to break with the traditional idea of delegating power merely on the basis of caste. One must notice here that while Karnad works consciously to fashion a new form of syncretic theatre by reclaiming pre-colonial forms of Indian theatre, he debunks backwardness, superstition, obscurantism and feudal structures which characterize its content. What is significant in this conflicting position of the playwright is the hint at the syncretic process of urban folk drama which demands greater responsibility on the part of the playwright in negotiating between the form, content, style, language and staging conventions of both folk/rural and urban/classical theatres.

The parallel between urban and classical is of vital importance to the present discussion, since these two share certain commonalties in terms of their social implications. Sudipto Chatterjee's analysis of the social implications of theatricality in the context of Bengali theatre is applicable to

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the theatricality of the syncretic process of very many contemporary Indian plays:

> Theatricality is a metaphor to analyze the 'multifarious workings' of the socio-cultural mise-en-scene of the Bengal Renaissance as the conjunction of a text composed of a newly discovered national identity, a process of catalysis/rehearsal involving intense social debate and change, and a performance consisting of the copious literary and dramatic output of Bengali authors. In this context, Bengali theatre performs a metonymic function and works like a play-within-a-play. It is both emblematic as well as a product of larger mise-en-scene of the social order.

The techniques that Karnad has used to re-enact the myth in the present play too can be analyzed in the context of urban theatre, for, in post-independence India, all works of art and that too, those written in English depend for their survival/popularity as much on print culture which is essentially urban, as on those people who, by virtue of their modern western education, are alienated from their own roots.

Just as the portrayal of Nittilai, so also the performance of the play *The Triumph of Lord Indra* makes the present play a drama about urban folk drama within the frame of syncretic theatre. Though the present play is in response to the classical notion of drama as *yajna* (sacrifice), the manner in which the proposed play (*The Triumph of Lord Indra*) of the Actor-Manager is conceived and performed shows itself as a typical folk performance. This becomes evident in the Actor-Manager's conversation with Arvasu just before the epilogue: "We actors are always on the move. Never stationary. And often along the way we see a scene. A bit of life. Only a tiny bit as we pass by. But enough to give us a sense of the rest of the story" (Karnad 2005: 156). Needless to say that the Actor-Manager's statement is about *The Triumph of Lord Indra*, which he actually puts on in the epilogue.

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That the *Triumph of Lord Indra* is a folk performance becomes evident when Arvasu exhibits his skill in dancing and gets the approval of the Actor-Manager to play the role of Vritra in the proposed play. In fact, he attributes the excellence of his skill in dancing to the company of the hunters he kept from his childhood days:

> Arvasu: I like dancing. If I dance now-will you tell me if I am any good?
>
> Actor-Manager: you?
>
> Arvsau: I realize-it sounds absurd-
>
> Actor-Manager: But you are not an actor. You are a high-caste-
>
> Arvasu: I used to be with the hunters most of the time. Dancing. Singing. I like dancing...
>
> Arvasu: so- I'm not too bad then?
>
> Actor-Manager: bad? You're excellent (Karnad 2005: 158-59)

Therefore, the skill of acting as well as dancing that learned from the hunters and that Arvasu is going to make use of it for playing the role of Vritra in the proposed play makes it clear that the play performed in the epilogue is in the tradition of folk performance.

The one-to-one correspondence between the Actor-Manager's statement about his play-making and his actual announcement of the play, *The Triumph of Lord Indra*–"I even have a play ready. We'd just decided on it when the old man died. A perfect choice for this fire sacrifice. *The Triumph of Lord Indra*, A play about the struggle between Lord Indra and the demon Vritra." (ibid: 162)– becomes interesting when one realizes that the Actor-Manager's reference to the old man's death points to the gap between the conception of the plot and its completion. Likewise, the gap is also suggestive of Girish Karnad's rumination over the myth of Yavakri(ta) for thirty-seven long years which, according to him,

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"is a long time to live with myth for a company. It inevitably grows and changes with one" (ibid: 298).

When Karnad's rumination of the myth of Yavakri(ta) culminates in the change that he talks of, it can be argued, he indirectly refers to the syncretic process of the present play, which gives scope for contemporary drama critics to infer the socio-political implications of urban folk drama. In order to facilitate such inference, it may be said that Karnad makes Nittilai's self-effacement acquire a status equal to that of the seven-year long fire sacrifice. Indeed, it is the self-effacement of Nittilai and Arvasu that brings Indra onto earth and the much needed rain in the end. However, the point to be noted here is that the sacrifice of Nittilai and Arvasu does not take place at the expense of the fire sacrifice. It actually occurs within the frame of the fire sacrifice. This means that the aim of the playwright is perhaps not to privilege one over the other, but to suggest that the co-existence of the two systems alone can be a working formula for the harmony of any diversified culture like ours.

The very purpose of giving the present play the title *The Fire and the Rain* (*Agni Mattu Male*) is perhaps to suggest to the readers/spectators that the establishment of India as a modern nation can never be achieved at the cost of any region. Likewise, the formation of the canon called Indian theatre can never be achieved without the contribution of regional theatres. In conclusion, it may be said that the authority of Indian nation/ theatre, as the conjunction 'and' in the title of Karnad's play suggests, is to be distributed among the whole body of regional tradition/playwrights who have contributed to it.

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Afterword

Kailash C. Baral

For me, writing an afterward to the present volume is in many ways rewarding as well as limiting. It is rewarding because I am invited to make a short contribution in the form of this afterword to a volume on Chitta Ranjan Das who is not only an intellectual of high order but for me almost a cult figure. It is limiting in the sense that I did not get an opportunity to read extensively Chitta Ranjan's work to get hold of the depth and dimension of his oeuvre. I appreciate the efforts put in by Dr. Ananta Kumar Giri in bringing out this volume in honour of Chitta Ranjan and personally, I am obliged to him in allowing me to know more about Chitta Ranjan's work through his writing.

Chitta Ranjan Das passed away on 16th January 2011. His death has marked the end of an era; for he grew up in the turbulent period of India's freedom struggle imbibing some of the ideals of Gandhi and Tagore as his personal goal. The most notable and enabling ideal that he transformed into his lifelong *sadhana,* the very mode of his being is *freedom* of the spirit and of the mind. I was fortunate to listen to some of his deep, reflective public lectures at the Utkal University during 1976-77; it is an experience to listen to his talks, lucid, colloquial and stirring that have an electrifying effect on the young minds. Reading his works today in our postcolonial and postmodern times, when we mourn Chitta Ranjan's death, one is reminded of what Douzinas said about Derrida that "The mourning provides the

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first chance and terrible condition of all reading" (2007:11). Reading has been a challenge that does not imply only reading works left behind by Chitta Ranjan but, on the one hand, to feel his "presence in absence" and, on the other, knowing the person through his works, for death removes the named from the name allowing us to relocate the name in the works in remembrance of the dead in multiple signatures of one name that inscribes the totality of a life. Even after his death, Chitta Ranjan communicates with us through his works and thoughts, making reading itself a challenge for understanding life in the mirror of time.

The present volume on Chitta Ranjan underlines two intertwined histories: the history of works that carry his signature as an author and the lived life and the afterlife of the deceased as a person. The life history of an individual like Chitta Ranjan opens up multiple windows that allow us to have a look into his past, the past of his community intricately connected to the present and often provides an inarticulate pleasure having a peep into a future yet to arrive. Chitta Ranjan was a time traveler. He brought his culture to dialogue with other cultures of the world and continued to make the past of his culture relevant to the present. In balancing two time zones: the past and the present, Chitta Ranjan was restlessly immersed in a self quest, mining deep into the intricate relationships between society, the cultural sphere and other institutional structures through which an individual comprehends and meditates on ideas such as freedom, liberation, cultural wealth, wellbeing, democracy, secularism, education, ideology, creative writing and so on. As a humanist, following Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Bhima Bhoi and Achutananda, he asks the most pertinent question, what others have asked for centuries, what makes a man human? Who takes the responsibility making the human child an integrated person? Is it education as processed

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information or is it human education that is important? What makes native knowledge valuable and equally competing with Western knowledge systems? All these and many other themes are part of Chitta Ranjan's self enquiry. Like Bakhtin, he believes that our existence itself is a process of communication; hence, in a world of continuous communication, what is important is dialogue with different systems of knowledge, ideas and cultures of the East and the West. It has been his persistent effort to hold together the home and the world with empathy and felicity. For him, the meditation (Tapasya) on the *being* is not enough unless we are sure of the path of *becoming*. Knowledge may be power but more important is its true understanding and application, in particular, in what way it enriches human life and makes the world a better place to live in.

Led by the conviction that all humanistic knowledge is on the side of life, Chitta Ranjan has sought the particular in the universal and vice versa. In his very deep and humanistic understanding of life and events, he has immensely enriched Odia literature, criticism and social thinking. Equipped with a sensibility that refused to follow the beaten path, he was critical of many Odia cultural personalities and modes of social thinking. A person of high intellectual order, Chitta Ranjan always picks up valuable insights from the past and advises the youth to follow them. Today, in the absence of Chitta Ranjan, it becomes our responsibility to carry forward his message and expand his vision for the enrichment of Odia and other cultures of the world.

He was a freedom fighter, an expert in rural development and also an astute observer of the flow of life. During Emergency in 1976-77, the defining year for Indian democracy, Chitta Ranjan was against both the oppressive Government regime as well as the unreflective mob action. Chitta Ranjan is never for any oppressive regime that silences people but for a positive and humanistic revolution that allows life to blossom, culture to

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flourish and society to become healthy. For this to happen, he believes in an evolving self that embraces contradictions and accepts creative and critical openness.

The editor of the volume has rightly added a very significant section titled "Philosophy, Literature and Social Transformation." These three fields in a significant way capture Chitta Ranjan's thinking as interlocked domains in that the abstract is concretized in a creative way in helping transform a society. The call of the inner/intuitive self assumes a philosophical dimension in differentiating what is good and what is not good for the self, the society and the world. Positive worldviews emerge from such unique minds, which part of the world they may hail form, for being singularly committed to the wellbeing of the human world. Openness is the key to his intellectual spirit that is energized by his native experience. Today, when we look at Chitta Ranjan's contribution to Odia intellectual life, one should not travel a narrow road, but welcome the wide open space from where his ideas have come to life and have evolved. Finally, if I may add, as a thinker Chitta Ranjan in his own unique way shares Derrida's vision of global cosmopolitanism and cross-cultural hospitality. I think both believed and worked for a reinvented humanism to embrace our world.

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Ase Moller Hansen is a deep seeker and creative writer who lives and works in Bergen, Norway. She is a novelist who also writes for children. A graduate in sociology from University of Bergen, Ase works with the immigration department of the city and helps kindly many people who come to embrace the snow in her beautiful country of mountains and lakes. On reading about Chitta Bhai's love for snow, Ase wrote that she also feels a sense of purity in snow and she considers snow as white angel. Ase is involved with many global justice movements such as Attac and International Women's Movement and she is part of a world-wide movement to ban depleted uranium. She was touched by the writings of Chitta Bhai and she showed me her note book filled with many lines from Chitta Bhai's thoughts. Though Chitta Bhai would have questioned our habit of note taking with a quip: first listen and realize and then take notes. Email: aasemh04@yahoo.com

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Dr. Ranjan K. Panda is an insightful philosopher of India who brings to his philosophical vocation a deep sense of quest, humility and dance of life. Dr. Panda teaches at Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.

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During Chitta Bhai's visit to Auroville in October 2009 Ranjan had come to be with Chitta Bhai and Usha Apa (Professor Usha Das, wife of Chitta Bhai) during their transit halt in Mumbai airport. Unfortunately because of security regulations, Ranjan was not allowed to go in. Chitta Bhai had then asked me the mobile number of Ranjan to thank him for his generosity. They could not speak and meet but it is in the creative seeking of students of life such as Ranjan that Chitta Bhai lives perennially. Ranjan is also the author of *Mind, Language and Intentioanality* (2008). Email: ranjan.panda@iitb.ac.in

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ADVANCE PRAISE

Chittaranjan Das, the philosopher who scripted epics on soil, embodied a civilizational movement in human history that upheld the culture and values of indigenous people in all parts of the world putting them at par with those of the dominant nations and envisioning a global future of what Ananta Giri calls 'co-realization' of equality, freedom and dignity of all. This book is an intellectual mile-stone in that journey.

Professor Manoranjan Mohanty, Council for Social Development, New Delhi.

A New Morning with Chitta Ranjan: Adventures in Co-realizations and World Transformations is an excellent tribute to life and journey of a world renowned thinker. Swami Vivekananda is known as wandering monk; in Chitta Ranjan Das we find a 'roving intellectual' who transformed our ways of analyzing and looking at social realities through new perspectives of literature and philosophy. In general social analytics has drawn its inspiration from the idea of 'matter' transforming 'matter' e.g. dialectical materialism. In Chitta Ranjan Das we find a rebel who provides a 'creative critique' of this world view that has dominated social sciences. In fact, he provides us an alternative pathway wherein 'spirit' (e.g. spiritual praxis/ spirituality and creativity) transforms the 'matter'. His personal experiences in Quit India Movement and practice of non-violent approaches to social transformation as well as association with holistic education experiments are inspiring pathways for all of us seeking souls to walk further and forward with. His approach is well reflected in his immortal writings in Odia. This book has immense

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value for the social thinkers, policy makers and activists interested in creating a new world through creative approaches of spirituality, literature and philosophy to create social transformation that will lead us towards harmonic development of human society.

Professor Subhash Sharma, Director, Indus Business Academy, Bangalore

This book presents us not only Das's exceptional accomplishment but also his humanitarian concerns which he considered as the central issues in life and which appear as urgent now as they were in the earlier time of his involvement with people from various walks of life,

Dr. Meera Chakravorty
Former Member, Karnataka State Women's Commission, Bangalore

Chitta Bhai was a saint-scholar par excellence of our times and in him we find a philosopher and a person endowed with extra-ordinary ability for creative thinking, writing and action. He was one of his kind who could throw fresh light in to any area of human seeking—science, literature, spirituality and the like. His life was an experiment with education and he was the only person I know of whose Aristotelian bent of ideas have percolated into practical dimensions as he was instrumental in creating large number of schools based on Integral education. Those who have interacted him alone would know how passionately he pursued his philosophical and literary activities and how lively he was in his conversations, at times full of a great sense of humour. This volume is a fine tribute to an engaging as well as creative thinker whose passing away has created a vacuum which is difficult to fill.

Professor Godabarisha Mishra, School of Philosophy and Religious Thought, University of Madras

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Chitta Bhai meets me as a "free-thinker" without the attribution to Younghusband and his band of Freethinkers. Of course, he shares with the Englishman the courage to pursue his convictions. He is identified with his work in the forest school in Odisha. His vision of un-mediated but inspired learning is a distant ideal in the apparently structured system of education in the towns and cities. He must have had tremendous energy- physical and spiritual- to walk to places and soak himself body, mind and soul in the different geographies and histories. He reminds me of the Bee in Jonathan Swift's tract called *The Battle of the Books*, that moves all the time, humming a music that harmonizes with the crisp morning air in the garden, that makes the flower yield unto it all the sweetness wholeheartedly. He must have been in possession of a heart that was only capable of love like the flowers that give to the bee. He is known to have walked together with Gandhi, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Grundtvig, Kristen Kold, Victor Frankl, Eric Fromm and many seekers of humanity. That way, his was a truly de-colonized mind that was looking for answers to questions that will continue to engage all of us. Some of his answers would be relevant for the re-making of a world order, indeed becoming a new *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* for our times.

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Chittaranjan Das, the philosopher who scripted epics on soil, embodied a civilizational movement in human history that upheld the culture and values of indigenous people in all parts of the world putting them at par with those of the dominant nations and envisioning a global future of what Ananta Giri calls 'co-realization' of equality, freedom and dignity of all. This book is an intellectual mile-stone in that journey.

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